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THE MIRROR;

OR,

A DELINEATION

OF

Different Classes of Christians,

IN

A SERIES OF LECTURES,

BY

REV. J. B. JETER, D.D.,

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY REV. A. M. POINDEXTER.

NEW YORK:

SHELDON, LAMPORT & BLAKEMAN,

115 Nassau Street.

1855.

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TO THE

REV. DANIEL WITT,

OF PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, VIRGINIA,

ONE OF HIS

EARLIEST AND MOST DEVOTED FRIENDS,

WHOSE LIFE HAS SO BEAUTIFULLY EXEMPLIFIED

THE SPIRIT AND PRECEPTS OF

CHRISTIANITY, IS THE

FOLLOWING WORK INSCRIBED,

AS A SMALL TESTIMONIAL OF THE HIGH AND AFFECTIONATE

REGARD IN WHICH HE IS HELD BY THE

AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

Some of the following Lectures were delivered a few years since, from brief notes, in the regular course of my pastoral ministrations. They were subsequently written out, and published, with a few additional Lectures, in a periodical of very limited circulation. Several judicious friends have requested me to republish them, in an enduring form. Hoping that their more extensive circulation will contribute something to increase the piety and usefulness of Christians, I have concluded to comply with the request. Some of the Lectures have been re-written, to others considerable additions have been made, the rest have been carefully revised, and several entirely new have been added.

The plan of the work is, so far as I know, unique. Its main object is the correction of prevalent faults among professing Christians. Some of these are seemingly trivial, but they seriously mar the moral

beauty, and impair the efficiency of those who are guilty of them; and rarely, if ever, is an attempt made to correct them, in the usual course of pulpit instruction. The plan of these Lectures, partly didactic and partly narrative, afforded an opportunity, without violating the unity of the design, or giving offence, to aim at the correction of every species of sin and folly.

The characters delineated in the Lectures are partly fictitious, but the incidents stated are substantially true. Most of them have occurred under my own observation, some have been related to me by truthful witnesses, and a few have been gleaned in reading. These facts have been modified to suit my purposes, disguised to avoid giving offence, and so combined as to produce the best effects. In some cases, the facts are detailed with historical fidelity, in others, the sex is changed, and in others again, that is represented as having taken place with me which took place with others, or as having happened to others which happened to me. In some delineations, I had a half dozen originals before my mind. I do not think that any person can find just cause of offence in the Lectures. But should any one surmise that I must have meant him, I can only say, that I have spoken in kind-

ness and honesty, and sincerely hope that he may be profited by my words.

To the lovers of fiction, I doubt not, my stories will seem insipid, if not disgusting; to the unbending advocates of the orthodox plan of religious instruction, they may appear incompatible with the dignity of the pulpit; but if they serve the purpose of correcting, in any measure, the evils which abound in Christian churches, the author will be abundantly compensated for the labor of preparing them for publication.

J. B. JETER.

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, *March* 8, 1855.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

The design of this work is, by a practical exhibition of Christian character, in its excellencies and defects, to encourage the followers of Christ to cultivate those and to avoid these. This is a matter of great moment. And the method pursued by the author is well adapted to secure the object. Didactic instruction, however valuable and well expressed, does not so awaken attention as narrative. But there is danger when narrative alone is used, that the interest awakened will expend itself in fruitless sympathy. A just combination of both methods may secure the advantages, and avoid the evils peculiar to each. Such a combination the author attempts; and he has to a happy extent succeeded. In each Lecture is discussed and illustrated some one type of Christian character, and thus instruction is impressed upon the memory and upon the heart.

The subjects treated are of the highest importance. The Gospel is a practical system. Its power, as such, is developed in the character of Christians. Not that in any one there is that moral beauty which perfect conformity to the Gospel would impart: nor that the state of the Christian profession is a fair and full ex-

position of its principles and tendencies. But the actual working of the system, as a power antagonizing all the forms of corruption, is exhibited in the followers, and the churches, of Christ. And the influence of Christianity upon mankind, depends very materially upon the piety of Christians.

The Gospel is a sanctifying power. It purifies wherever it controls. It is a perfect mould, which, so far as the heart is brought into undisturbed contact with it, forms it into the image of the Holy One. The heart thus renewed will produce purity of life. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The actions of men are daguerreotypes of the "hidden man of the heart." There may be the assumption of character in order to deceive. And the hypocrite may, perchance, act his part with as much verisimilitude and success as Garrick ever attained upon the stage. This fact, however, demonstrates, that, in the absence of such detestable fraud, the life is the heart revealed. Were it not for the confidence that men are what they seem to be, there would neither be the power nor the motive to deceive. It is vain to pretend to piety in the neglect of morality. Such a claim will not be credited. Nor should it be. Grace does not dissolve, but sanctify, the union which exists in nature between the heart and the life. "A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." The heart is the fountain—the life, the stream which flows from it. The Gospel infuses right principles,

imparts correct rules of conduct, and enforces these rules by holy and powerful motives. And then only has its influence been realized, when both the heart and the life are holy.

Christianity affects the world mainly through the piety of Christians. The Bible may be read for the information it imparts; admired for its simplicity, its purity, its beauty and sublimity; it may modify the laws, and improve the morals of society; it may, apart from example, occasionally prove the means of salvation; but generally it will be an inoperative power when unaccompanied by Christian influence.

The pulpit is a consecrated place. The Author of Salvation has ordained "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But, if the preacher be a wicked man, his utterances of the truth are more likely to draw upon him the scorn of his hearers, than to be "the power of God unto" their salvation. He is as "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place"—a sign of God's wrath, rather than a messenger of his mercy.

The churches of Christ are the divinely appointed agencies for the conversion of the world. A pure and devoted church, animated by the Spirit, engaged in the service, and reflecting the glory of the Redeemer, exerts a saving influence of great prevalence and power. Happy the community where such a church exists, "for there the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for ever more." But a church of ungodly or disorderly members, however Scriptural their creed,

however enthusiastic their devotions, however earnest their zeal, is a positive and serious injury. If they make proselytes, they are apt to become "two-fold more the children of hell" than they were before. Sober, reflecting men will say, "O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united."

The piety of a church depends upon the piety of the members. As there is no greater numerical strength than the aggregate of the individual members, so there can be no more of piety than the constituents of the church possess. What is possessed by them is possessed by the church—what is wanting in them is wanting in the church. And no one is a better man by being a church member unless he is a real Christian. On the contrary, such a connection, in the absence of a corresponding spirit and deportment, is decidedly injurious. It tends to lessen a sense of accountability, and to shield the conscience from the shafts of truth. And it is well, if, from the sin of professing a character to which he is not entitled, the unworthy member does not advance to the perpetration of open crime.

We fear that many persons deceive themselves at this point. They could illy bear to scrutinize their own characters. There is a conscious unholiness which causes them to turn, instinctively, from prayerful self-examination. The only aspect in which they can, with any composure, contemplate themselves, is as members of a church. This relation imparts to them a fancied

sanctity. Association with the children of God, they regard as an evidence of their piety, and they carefully avoid any inquiry into their right to belong to such a fellowship. The condition of such an one is well nigh hopeless. It is barely possible to awaken him to any adequate sense of his danger; or to cause him to form any just conception of his guilt. His sin resembles that of Annanias and Saphira. Having covenanted to give himself, and all that he has to Christ, he has kept back not *a part only*, but *the whole of the price.*

There are those who, though really converted, have entered but little into the spirit of the Gospel. They are Christians, but they are weak and sickly Christians. The religious life with them is low, and its pulsations are feeble. They have enough vitality to preserve from putrefaction but not for vigorous action. Such claim our compassion. Usually, they are quite unhappy. Their conscientiousness interrupts worldly enjoyment, and they have few spiritual pleasures. Harrassed with doubts, their days are gloomy, and their nights are burdened with sighs. The influence which they exert is unfavorable to piety. They present religion in a repulsive form, especially to the young, the most hopeful subjects of Christian effort. The ardent and buoyant feelings of youth are shocked and offended by a religion so unsatisfying and melancholy. They are unfitted, too, for efficient labor in the cause of Christ. Their attention is so concentra-

ted upon themselves, that it is difficult to interest them for the welfare of others. And if they do become interested, they are so timid and apprehensive as to cripple all their exertions.

Others, again, have more of spiritual life, but are wanting in constancy. When, from peculiar circumstances, they are excited, they manifest strong religious feeling, and much interest for the salvation of souls. But these feelings soon subside, and they sink into a state of indifference. Now it would be difficult to discover wherein they differ from the unconverted. They appear to be as entirely engrossed by worldly cares as those who make no pretensions to piety. Whatever time, or attention is yielded by them to religious duties seems to be given with reluctance. Whatever sacrifice they may make, it is not the cheerful offering of a willing heart, but the enforced contribution of an upbraiding conscience. Such inconsistency fatally obstructs the beneficial influence which they might exert. Besides the loss of their assistance during these periods of backsliding, the consistent friends of Christ have reason to deprecate their attempts to do good when they are actuated by their revived feelings. A suspicion of their sincerity is induced. And they are quite as likely to repel with disgust, as to succeed, when they attempt to bring sinners to repentance. "Physician, heal thyself," may be expected to be, if not on every tongue, in every mind. And men are not willing to receive reproof from those in whose piety they do not confide.

An awakened sinner will distrust the counsel of one whose religion he doubts.

But there are among the disciples of Christ, many who afford indubitable evidence of piety. Religion, with them, is not a name, or a form. It is a vital, active principle. Their lives clearly manifest the sanctifying power of the Gospel. They are, *living* "epistles; known and read of all men." However humble, or exalted their position in society, whatever may be their vocation, they exert a salutary influence. Yet, not unfrequently the characters of those whose piety no one doubts, are greatly injured by some unlovely temper, or unamiable habit, or repulsive eccentricity. "He is a good man, but I cannot love him. He is so morose, or haughty, or overbearing.—I should respect Mr. A. very highly, were it not for that disagreeable habit. I wonder that a Christian will so indulge.—Mr. B. is a pious man. What a pity he is so eccentric."—How often do we hear expressions like these. In such cases "the fine gold has become dim." The attractive and assimilating power of Christian example is counteracted. Prejudices are engendered which it may be impossible to remove—and occasion is afforded to the enemies of the Gospel to vilify Christian character.

In the church, such blemishes are likely to prove a sore evil. They tend to weaken the affections; and mar the enjoyments of the brotherhood. They are, by the nature of the relation, constantly obtruded upon their attention, and it demands unusual forbearance

to prevent them from producing coolness, if not alienation. At best they must detract from the sweetness of fellowship. The communion of saints, demands, for its full enjoyment, the perfect likeness of Christ. Whatever want of this is seen in any participant, lessens the pleasures of the union. Although a forbearing spirit, strengthened by a sense of personal unworthiness, may enable Christians to overlook, or to tolerate many improprieties, it is at the expense of that oneness of feeling which is so precious to the child of God. We may love notwithstanding some evil, or unamiable characteristic; but we cannot so love as we should in its absence. Church members sometimes complain that their brethren do not love them. Would it not be well for such to inquire, whether, in truth, they are not unlovely? Christian affection naturally fixes upon those whose deportment is conformed to "whatsoever things are pure—lovely—and of good report." But if any will be unkind, or factious, or dictatorial, or morose—if they will not take the pains to be lovely—let them not complain if they are not beloved.

An affectionate, tender and earnest fellowship in a church is of the greatest importance. It most effectually commends the Gospel to the confidence of mankind. Where all are united in one heart and one spirit, each sharing the sorrows and the joys of every one, seeking by every kind attention to promote the prosperity and happiness of all, and where all concur to maintain the purity, and advance the interests of

the church, a spectacle is exhibited upon which God looks with delight, and the world with admiration and awe. Such a church is indeed an Oasis in the desert; and many weary travelers will there rest, and refresh their tired spirits. That a Christian should interrupt such delightful harmony is most sad. Yet, how often do those whom we can but regard as converted men, by the want of circumspection, or self-restraint, cause bitterness and contention in the churches! It may be doubted whether the larger proportion of strifes are not produced by such. Hypocrites and deluded persons are not likely so to gain the confidence of the godly as to enable them to work the mischiefs which a pious, but contentious man may effect. And surely it is less to be regretted when the wicked injure the cause of Christ. "If it were an enemy, then I could have borne it." To be wounded in the house of a friend, and by the hand of a friend, is a sore calamity.

Whether, then, we contemplate the Christian as the exponent of the practical power of Christianity—as the servant of Christ, sent forth to labor for the salvation of men, or as a member of a church organized for the conversion of the world, we see the importance of a living, transforming, earnest piety. It is an absolute necessity. The want of it unfits him for every duty, detracts from the practical influence of the Gospel, endangers souls, and dishoners the Redeemer!

The churches are beginning to act in the spirit of Christianity as an aggressive power. They are hoping, and laboring that "the whole earth (may) be filled

with (the) glory" of Messiah. The work before them is great. The struggle will be arduous and protracted. Every soldier of the cross is needed in the conflict. None should be irresolute, or inactive. Fully equipped in heavenly armour, the entire "sacramental host" should go forth, "conquering and to conquer." How needful, then, that from the pulpit, and the press, those truths be urged which are suited to correct the errors, and to increase the piety of Christians. God grant that this book may have such an influence! We can wish no better for either ourselves, the author, or the readers, than that its faithful teachings may be inscribed upon our hearts, and embodied in our lives.

LECTURE I.

LIVING CHRISTIANS.

THE name "*Christians*," first given to the disciples of Jesus in the city of Antioch, was probably of divine origin.* It is appropriate, and very significant. The admirers and pupils of distinguished teachers were called after their names. The disciples of Plato were called Platonists—those of Aristotle were called Aristotelians—and those of Pythagoras were called Pythagoreans. The disciples of Christ were early styled Christians. A Christian is a follower of Christ—one who receives the Word, trusts in the atonement, imbibes the Spirit, imitates the example, obeys the precepts, espouses the cause, and honors the name of Christ. Such is the scriptural import of the title.

A Christian is the highest style of man—the wisest, best, happiest, noblest of his race. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor."† To the superficial observer this superiority may not appear; but it is manifest to Him that searches the heart, and estimates human conduct by the principles from which it flows, and the motives by which it is governed.

* Acts xi: 26. † Prov. xii: 26.

All the splendor of royalty, all the achievements of warriors, all the fruits of science, and all the triumphs of genius, dwindle to insignificance in comparison with the moral attainments, and enduring immunities of the true Christian.

A faithful delineation of *Christian character*—its various *excellences* and *defects*—cannot fail to interest and profit the attentive and serious hearer. To this object I propose to devote a few Lectures. I shall endeavor concisely to describe several *classes of Christians*, be-ginning with the *good*, and closing with the *defective*.

Under the first general class, we may place *Living Christians*, *Growing Christians*, *Useful Christians*, *and Happy Christians*.

To draw the character of *Living Christians* is the aim of the present Lecture.

All who are called Christians are not *Living* Christians. Some have a name that they live, and are dead.* They are Christians in profession, but in spirit and practice they are heathen. They may, in deed, have the form of Godliness, but they utterly deny its power. They wear the garb, but possess not the spirit of Christ. Profession, if any thing better than hypocrisy, succeeds regeneration. Without faith, love, and devotion, it is not merely vain, but offensive to God. It is the garnishing of the sepulchre full of bones and putrefaction. It is offering to

* Rev. iii : 1.

God the halt, the maimed, and the blind in sacrifice. Such Christians are dead in the worst sense of the word—"dead in trespasses and sins"—dead to God, and heaven. Their living bodies are the sepulchers of lifeless souls. But the true Christian has life—divine life—eternal life. Holiness is to the soul, what life is to the body—its beauty, enjoyment and glory. This invaluable endowment every believer possesses; for faith purifies the heart.* "I am crucified," he may say, "with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."†

Living Christians are not such by *natural birth.* A man may be born a king, but not a Christian. He may inherit a vigorous constitution, beauty, genius, wealth, and an illustrious name, but not piety or grace. The sons of God are born "not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man."‡ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."§ Descent from Abraham, whatever advantages it secured under the Levitical economy, is a vain plea for admittance to Christian privileges. "Think not to say within yourselves," said the harbinger of Jesus, to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came to his baptism, "We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."‖

* Acts xv: 9. † Gal. ii; 20. ‡ John i: 13.
§ John iii: 6. ‖ Mat. iii: 9.

"Poets are such by birth 'tis said,
Nor can by rules of art be made;
But not by birth do Christians shine—
They are new made, by grace divine."

Living Christians are not the product of *mere education.* Far be it from me to undervalue the religious instruction and training of children. The experience of every year convinces me more deeply that the religious education of youth is the great business of human life. There is reason to hope that children properly trained will early become pious. The words of Solomon express a general, and most encouraging truth—"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* Still it should be borne in mind that religious instruction is a means of conversion, not conversion itself. Education may make a mechanic, a sailor, a philosopher, an orator, a statesman, or a nominal Christian, but not a *Living Christian.* It may polish the exterior, but cannot change the heart. It may reform the manners, but cannot rectify the principles. Something higher, and deeper, and mightier than moral suasion, and outward discipline, is demanded for man's moral renovation.

Living Christians are not made by *baptism.* Whatever may be its uses, or efficacy, it is not *Christening*—not making Christians—not regeneration. It is taught by very respectable, but not by divine au-

* Prov. xxii: 6.

thority, that by baptism infants are regenerated, made members of the mystical body of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. It is maintained by a modern sect that believers are made Christians by baptism. But the Bible teaches that Living Christians are the only proper subjects of this ordinance. Disciples and Christians are terms used interchangably in the New Testament. "The *disciples* were first called *Christians* at Antioch." Disciples are Christians, and Christians are disciples; and disciples —Christians—are the only persons divinely required to be baptized. "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John"*—first made disciples, or Christians—no doubt, *Living Christians*—and then baptized them. Baptism is for the living and not for the dead—for the regenerate and not for the depraved—for Christians and not for the enemies of Christ.

Living Christians are such by a *divine and gracious influence.* To take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh, is God's prerogative.† Some things man can do, and some things he cannot. He can teach, warn, entreat, pray—can convince the understanding, agitate the passions, and refine the manners—but, however pious, learned and eloquent, he cannot make the waters of contrition flow, subdue the love of sin, nor kindle in the heart the flame of love and devotion—in a word, cannot impart life to the soul. The living Christian is quickened of God—

* John iv; 1. † Ez. xxxvi: 26.

born of the Spirit—made a partaker of the divine nature—raised from the dead—created in Christ Jesus unto good works—has a hidden life—possesses eternal life—and this life is sustained by the exhaustless fullness of Christ Jesus.*

Life, whether physical or spiritual, is not easily defined. It cannot be analyzed. We are convinced of its existence by its effects. Our senses readily distinguish a living man from a dead body, though we may be unable to say in precisely what the difference lies. The difference between a Living and a dead Christian is real, wide and obvious, whatever difficulty there may be in defining, with accuracy and clearness, its nature.

I cannot, perhaps, better explain the nature of spiritual life than by furnishing the experience, and briefly delineating the character of brother LIVELY. He is, I trust, a *Living Christian;* though he is very far from setting himself up as a model of piety. I have selected his case for illustration, partly because I am well acquainted with it, and partly because there is nothing in his exercises, or attainments, to deter the feeblest and most timid believer from indulging the hope of equaling, or excelling him in piety.

I shall give you the early experience of brother *Lively*, as nearly as I can, in his own words; and as he was fond of telling it, especially in the commencement of his religious life, in meetings for social prayer, I have a pretty distinct recollection of it.

* John xiv: 19.

"I was brought up," this brother would say, sometimes with deep emotion, "in an irreligious family. I never heard my father pray. I was not in my youth acquainted with a single family in which morning and evening devotions were offered to God. There were no Sunday schools, and no religious tracts within my reach. Residing in a sparsely settled region, I rarely heard the Gospel preached; and much of the preaching which I heard was but little adapted to enlighten, impress, or interest the mind. My associates were, with few exceptions, irreligious, but not vicious. Literally, I may say, 'no man cared for my soul.' I have no recollection that any human being ever spoke a word to me about my salvation, except my mother, (who was not herself a professor of religion) until I evinced an anxiety on the subject. My mind was early impressed with its necessity; but I supposed it was something too good for me—or that I must patiently wait until God, in his own good time and way, should be pleased to convert me.

"I was brought up on a farm. When about seventeen years old, I was ploughing alone. Suddenly, I knew not why, I began to think of God. While I meditated on his goodness, greatness, and all-pervading presence, my mind became so deeply impressed with my responsibility to him, my sinfulness, and my entire dependence on him, that I trembled in every joint, and the tears flowed profusely down my cheeks. I bowed for the first time in my life, between the handles of the plough, to offer prayer to God. After a

short time the tempest of emotion subsided, and the pride of my heart began to show itself. I knew that no human being had seen me in prayer, and yet I felt ashamed—ashamed that even God should have heard me pray. My impressions did not, however, quickly vanish. I continued for some weeks to pray, and grew self-righteous. I began to think myself very good—not, indeed, converted, but almost good enough to be. On my companions, who were thoughtless and worldly, I could but look down with sincere pity. Gradually my impressions became feebler, and my prayers more infrequent, until I relapsed into my former apathy and worldliness. Often, however, my conscience would trouble me. I felt that all was not well within. I dared not to think of death and judgment. The death of an acquaintance, an earnest sermon, any religious book or tract, which might chance to fall in my way, would quicken my conscience, rouse my fears, and set me on a course of self-righteous labors. Of the plan of salvation I had no knowledge. All my conceptions on the subject of religion were exceedingly crude and superstitious. But the time approached when, through the mercy of God, I was to receive light and peace.

"A meeting of several days' continuance was appointed to be held in the neighborhood where I resided. The churches had passed through a long, wintry season; but the faithful laborers in the Lord's vineyard began to see signs of approaching spring. On the third and last day of the meeting, a glorious

revival commenced. I was among the first who felt the power of divine truth. I had often listened to the same ministers preaching the same truth; but it had a light and power which made it appear to me entirely new. I had never heard such preaching before. It seemed to search and penetrate my inmost soul. Many were as deeply affected by it as I was. I left the meeting fully resolved to become religious as soon as possible; nor did I doubt my ability to carry out my resolution. Indeed, I possessed an ambitious desire to outstrip my young companions, many of whom seemed inclined to enter on the Christian race. I supposed I must make myself good enough for God to convert me, and entered earnestly on a course of self-reformation. I abandoned all my known sins—meditated incessantly on the subject of religion—prayed often — wept much — attended all religious meetings within my reach, which were now greatly multiplied—at my own request was made the subject of special prayer—and, for a short time, I seemed to be making very satisfactory progress towards the kingdom of heaven. I deemed myself almost good enough to be saved. It was not long, however, before I began to discover the depravity of my heart. Surely, no poor wretch was ever more distressingly exercised than I was, for a season, with the corruptions of his nature. My heart seemed to be full of pride, selfishness, enmity against God, and especially deceit, which appeared to mingle with all my efforts to become religious. Thoughts, foolish, impure, and blas-

phemous, such as I had never been conscious of before, were constantly haunting my mind. My heart, which at first was tender, became as hard as a stone. Neither the love of Christ, the joys of heaven, nor the torrors of death and hell, could move it. The fountain of my tears was sealed up. If my salvation had been suspended upon my weeping, I could not have wept. My prayers were but a chattering noise, the babblings of a confused brain, without faith, and without fervor. I now almost despaired of salvation. I seemed to myself much farther from conversion than I was in the beginning of my exercises. I knew not what to do. To advance I could not; to return I had no desire. My ambitious hope of out-running my companions was slain. I saw and felt that my condemnation before God was just.

In this state of mind, I attended a religious meeting. A song was sung which described the sufferings of Christ. The poetry was bad, but the sentiment was evangelical, and made a deep impression on my mind. I thought of the Saviour's love, and sufferings, and death; and I asked myself, Did the Son of God endure all this for me? It seemed impossible. The mercy was too great for me. I was undeserving such favor, and ought hardly to receive it, if I might. While I was musing my heart dissolved, and my eyes, so long dry, poured out streams of tears. If I have ever known what sorrow was, I felt the deepest sorrow that I had offended and dishonored the greatest and best of Beings—my true and only Friend. Then I

hated my sins, and felt resolved, that, whether I was saved or lost, I would endeavor to sin no more. Then, I think, I began to be a penitent. Still an impenetrable cloud concealed from my mind the scheme of salvation.

"A few days after this, I attended a meeting many miles from my place of residence. At night I enjoyed the hospitality of a good man who lived near the meeting-place, and at whose house, according to the custom of the country, an evening service was held. The congregation had assembled, and the religious exercises had commenced. My own mind was absorbed in meditation on my lost and wretched condition. A godly and excellent minister, who evinced a deep concern for my salvation, had, repeatedly and most affectionately, pointed me to Christ, as the all-sufficient Saviour, and urged me to believe in him. To assist my faith, he had cited the words, 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.'* If I were to say a thousand times I endeavored to utter the words, I do not think I should speak extravagantly: but I could not, I dared not utter them. I feared I should be adding to all my other sins the sin of hypocrisy. What it was to believe I could not comprehend. To me it seemed that I might as well attempt to make a world as exercise faith. On the evening referred to, a new feeling pervaded my heart. I felt that I could believe in Christ; and I mentally said, not as I had

* Mat. ix: 24.

often said, 'Lord, I *would* believe,' but, 'Lord, I *believe;* help thou my unbelief.' Instantly my heart smote me for uttering a falsehood. This could not be faith. It was too simple. It bore no resemblance to the faith which I had been laboring to exercise. If this is faith, thought I, I might as well have believed a month ago. While I was thus meditating, the impression on my mind became stronger, and I repeated the words, with emphasis, 'Lord, I *do* believe; help thou my unbelief.' I had no new light, no strong impulse, but I felt a firm, calm, sweet, inspiring confidence in Christ. My heart was humbled, subdued, penitent. I had such a persuasion of the wisdom, mercy, and power of Christ, that I was perfectly willing to commit my soul to his hands. My burden of guilt, my fear, my anxiety, were all gone. For many weeks my sleep had been disturbed and restless: that night I laid down and slept, as if I had been in Paradise.

"In the morning, I arose. It was a bright, autumnal morning. I walked into the open air. The surrounding scenery was beautiful and grand. The towering mountains, of various forms, and in every direction, were covered with the gay and variegated livery of October. Never had creation seemed to me so charming. Every thing was full of God. The mountains and the hills broke forth into singing, and all the trees of the forest clapped their hands. The grass that sprang at my feet proclaimed the power and goodness of the Lord. Never had I listened to such

a symphony of praise; and my poor heart, long bruised and burdened, spontaneously joined in the grateful homage. I chid myself that I, a sinner, condemned, and possibly abandoned to destruction, should have the madness to offer praise to God. But the deep feeling of my heart was not to be repressed by the cold surmisings of scepticism. To all these doubts my heart replied, What if I am a sinner, condemned and doomed to hell, shall I not praise God that I am not now there, and that I have enjoyed so many mercies at his hands?

"I retired to the forest, and in a deep and secluded ravine, bowed my knees to pray. I had never before offered a prayer for any being except myself. I soon found my heart irresistibly drawn out to offer prayer for my parents—my sisters and brothers—my widening circle of kindred—my unconverted companions and acquaintances—and still my petitions were enlarged, until they embraced the whole world. I was a wonder to myself. Setting my face toward the abode of my hospitable friend, I soon met the venerated minister, whose labors had contributed most to my guidance and encouragement. Having marked the change in my countenance, he kindly inquired after the state of my mind. I most gladly revealed to him my exercises. After hearing my statements, he said, with a smile, 'You are converted.' I knew not whether I was more astonished or delighted at the remark. The thought that I was converted had not so much as entered my head. This was not the conversion for

which I had been long seeking. I had expected, misguided, I know not how, to feel a sudden shock—to have some wonderful manifestation—to experience some mysterious transformation—and I had only found a calm, confiding, loving, obedient, and joyous spirit. I sought the Lord in the tempest, the fire, and the earthquake; but, lo! I found him, if I had found him at all, 'in the still small voice.'"

Here I must drop the experience of brother *Lively*. He came to the conclusion, not from the judgment of his devoted pastor, but from a comparison of his experience with the word of God, that he had "passed from death unto life." In that conclusion we may charitably concur. There is in various respects a resemblance between natural and spiritual life—between a living man and a Living Christian. The properties of physical life may be aptly employed to illustrate the nature of spiritual life.

Is *sensibility* a sign of life? The spiritual sensibility of brother *Lively* indicates that he possesses life. Divine truth makes suitable and abiding impressions on his heart. He believes when God affirms, trusts when God promises, trembles when God threatens, and accords a cheerful obedience when God commands. By God's providences, he is filled with adoring gratitude, or humble submission, as they are gracious or afflictive. He remembers his sins and imperfections with unfeigned contrition and self-abasement; and joyfully contemplates the ample provision made by Christ for the salvation and eternal blessed-

ness of them that trust in him. His spiritual sensibility, if I may be permitted to use the phrase, marks him out as one that has "passed from death unto life."

Is *breath* a mark of vitality?

> "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
> The Christian's native air."

He that lives without prayer lives without God. That sincere, believing prayer is an element of true piety needs no proof. The spiritual life can no more be sustained without prayer than the physical without breath.

> "Long as they live should Christians pray,
> For only while they pray they live."

Brother *Lively* is a man of prayer. In his closet—in his family—in the meetings for social worship—he prays, and loves to pray. He does not always enjoy in the same degree "the spirit of grace and of supplications," but he would ever consider it a great calamity to be deprived of the privilege of coming boldly unto the throne of grace, that he "may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Is *appetite* a sign of life? God has made the preservation of every kind of life, of which we have any knowledge, to depend on nutrition. Vegetable life is nourished by the soil, the air, moisture and light; and animal life by food and drink. God's word—divine truth—is the appointed nutriment of the spiritual

man. Brother *Lively* hungers for this food. As a new born babe, he desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby.* No infant ever more naturally and earnestly desired the milk from its mother's breast, than he desires his appointed nourishment. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and is equally concerned to enjoy the means of its attainment. As the hunted hart, weary and exhausted, pants after the cooling brook, so he pants after God—the living God.† And brother *Lively* furnishes this proof that he loves the word of God—he reads, studies, and obeys it—makes it his sword and shield in battle, his staff in the journey of life, his light in darkness, and his solace in affliction.

Is *activity* an indication of life? Brother *Lively* is an active Christian. His faith is not a barren speculation, but a deep, vital, fruitful principle. His ardent emotions do not evaporate in good wishes, and fair words. He lives not for himself; seeks not mainly his own interest, gratification or glory. Having been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by the spirit of grace, he is constrained to present his body—himself—"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," which he deems his "reasonable service."‡ Had he ten thousand hearts, ten thousand lives, ten thousand worlds, he would give them all to Christ, and feel that his debt of gratitude was in no degree diminished. Such, at least, were the feelings, pur-

* 1 Peter ii: 2. † Psa. xlii: 4. ‡ Rom. xii: 1.

poses and vows of this brother at the time of his espousal to Christ; and though, in subsequent life, amid the chilling influences, and seductive fascinations of the world, he may have failed to realize his early hopes, and fulfill his early promise, yet in his coldest, darkest hours, he has "pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

I will close this lecture with two or three remarks—

1. An experience—a *Christian experience,* is essential to the existence of *living piety.* There may, indeed, be a profession of religion—a form of godliness—a heartless orthodoxy—without any exercises deserving the name of Christian experience. I am aware that there are not a few religionists who look on religious experience as the imaginings of a weak, or the pretences of a corrupt mind. But can a man pass "from death unto life"†—have the eyes of his understanding enlightened ‡—and be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works"§—and not have an experience—differing not merely in degree, but kind, from any thing ever felt by the "natural man?" He may, indeed, be ignorant of the precise time of his conversion, or he may doubt whether his exercises have been of a gracious character; but he knows, and cannot but know, that his emotions have been various, deep, and influential. He could as soon doubt his existence, or renounce his hope of salvation, as his experience.

*Phil. iii: 14. †Jno. iii: 14. ‡Eph. i: 18. §Eph. ii: 10.

2. We should carefully distinguish between what is *essential* and what is *circumstantial in Christian experience.* Much has improperly passed under this name. The dreams of the ignorant, the fancies of the enthusiastic, the speculations of the curious, the illusions of the superstitious, and all these mingled in every conceivable variety, have been called Christian experience, and have, by their bitter fruits, brought suspicion and reproach on the genuine article. Every good thing is liable to be counterfeited; and Christian experience would lack one mark of excellence if it was exempted from this law. All that glitters is not gold; yet there is gold, "yea, fine gold." It is not unfrequently found, too, that genuine experience is mixed with much that is fanciful, extravagant and pernicious. The experiences of well instructed Christians frequently differ widely. They are greatly modified by temperament, early training, and other circumstances. The experience of no two believers is precisely the same. Some are converted suddenly, others by a long and tedious process—in some the understanding is more exercised, in others the emotions—some embrace Christ with strong, unwavering confidence, others with trembling and hesitation—some are filled with love, gratitude and joy, others with doubts, fears and anxiety—and these exercises are combined in every imaginable diversity. But still there are certain points found in the experience of every *Living Christian.* Convictions of sin—a sense of the justice of condemnation—godly sorrow—the hearty re-

nunciation of sin—trust in Christ for salvation—humility, gratitude, love, obedience—the hope of eternal life—these are the essential elements of piety, and they exist, in various proportions, and combinations, in every vital Christian. The time—the place—the circumstances of conversion are of little moment, provided the great, saving change has taken place in the conscious, willing, responsible and deathless spirit—a change controlling the outward, as well as the inward man.

3. No experience should be deemed genuine which does not lead to *a steady, persevering life of piety.* No measure of knowledge—no boasted orthodoxy—no intensity of feelings—can be a substitute for the "fruits of righteousness." If the tree be good, the fruit will be good. The gracious influence, by which experience is produced, is designed and suited to make men self-denying, patient, holy, heavenly; and when these fruits are not produced it has not been exerted. "I am the vine," said Jesus to his disciples, "ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and withered: and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."*

*John xv: 5-6.

LECTURE II.

GROWING CHRISTIANS.

I DEVOTE the Lecture of this evening to the delineation of *Growing Christians.*

There is through the whole extent of living beings a tendency to growth, enlargement, and maturity. We perceive it in the vegetable, animal and intellectual kingdoms. By the established law of growth and progress, the twig becomes a tree, the child a man, and the novice a philosopher. The same law prevails in the moral kingdom.

On this principle, bad men grow worse. Their evil propensities are strengthened by indulgence; their sinful practices are gradually changed into habits; and their unrestrained habits become more inveterate and uncontrollable. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."* By the same principle, good men grow better. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."† Christians are exhorted to "grow in grace"—or moral excellence and beauty; and this required increase is illustrated by the growth in nature. As in the vegetable so in the spiritual kingdom, there is "first the blade, then

* 2 Tim. iii: 13. † Prov. iv: 15.

the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."* We have, in the kingdom of grace, as in the kingdom of nature, "little children"—"young men"—and "fathers;" and these expressions are descriptive of Christians in different stages of their increase and maturity.†

The growth of Christians consists—

1. In an increase of *Knowledge*. "Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"‡ is the precept of an inspired apostle. The knowledge of a sound, active mind, is necessarily progressive. Observation and experience constantly increase the stock of its ideas, and extend the range of its vision. The young convert, even if he has been favored with careful religious training, possesses but comparatively little knowledge. His state is characterized by feeling, rather than light: but he has, in some degree, learned the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." He is not wise in his own conceit, but conscious of his ignorance and fallibility. He prizes the knowledge of divine things above silver and gold, and earnestly seeks for it as for hid treasure. He studies the workings of his own heart, as well as the word and ways of God. He becomes better acquainted with himself; his weakness, poverty, and unworthiness; his temptations, dangers, and necessities. And as he learns more of his own insufficiency and wretchedness, he perceives more clearly, and appreciates more fully the

* Mat. iv: 26–28. † Jno. ii: 13. ‡ Pet. iii: 18.

suitableness, freeness, and glory of his Redeemer. His views of divine things become more clear, consistent, and satisfactory. Attaining to full age, he has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

2. An increase of *Holiness.* In the young convert the work of sanctification is only commenced. His principles, desires, and aims are holy; he is sincere, conscientious, and ardent; but he is far from being perfect. His feelings are variable, his zeal is not tempered by discretion, and his piety is without symmetry. But in the growing Christian all the elements of moral goodness are increased. His "faith groweth exceedingly;" he "abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;" above all things, he puts on "charity, which is the bond of perfectness;" as he rises in piety, he sinks in humility; by degrees, he acquires a more perfect control of his appetites and passions; as he learns more of his own heart, he becomes more watchful against temptation; and as he feels more deeply his own weakness, he becomes more fervent and constant in prayer. As the members of the body, so the graces of the soul gain strength and consistency from exercise.

Am I a Growing Christian? I propose to notice some of the signs by which a growing Christian is distinguished. I name—

1. *He is dissatisfied with his religious attainments.* It is not the growing, but the luke-warm Christian, who says—"I am rich, and increased with goods, and

have need of nothing."* It was not the contrite publican, but the self-righteous pharisee, who said—"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are."† A diligent, faithful Christian may make high attainments in the divine life. His knowledge may be comprehensive, thorough and efficacious; his experience of divine things deep, varied and abiding; his deportment a shining commentary on the truth and efficacy of the Gospel; and, in fine, he may be a Christian, whom an inspired apostle would describe as "a dearly beloved brother;" but he can never attain to a point at which he is content to stop. He, who has reached the mountain-top, has missed the road to Heaven. This road lies through the vale of humility and self-abasement. A man who desires no higher religious attainments has yet to learn the first principles of piety. The apostle Paul was not merely a growing, but a well-grown Christian. In vain may we expect to find his equal, not to say in gifts, labors, and usefulness, but in all the elements of moral goodness and greatness; in faith, humility, disinterestedness and heroism; and yet this distinguished man laid no claim to perfection. "Not," said he, "as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."‡ Let every professing Christian then understand that, if he is satisfied with his present attainments, whatever else he may be, he is not a *Growing Christian.*

2. *The Growing Christian earnestly desires an in-*

* Rev. iii: 17 † Luke xviii: 11. ‡ Phil. iii: 12.

crease of holiness. He perceives its beauty, excellence and importance; and that he can neither be happy, nor safe, nor useful, without it. He relishes, longs for it, as the weary, thirsty traveler for water. He may desire many things; but he desires nothing so much as grace. Nothing else can satisfy him. This is the craving of his spiritual nature; and it can no more be satisfied with secular good, than a starving man can be with gold, or a man dying of the gout, with music. The apostle of the Gentiles, far from being content with his spiritual attainments, anxiously, earnestly and diligently sought a higher measure of holiness. "I press," these are his emphatic words—"I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* That mark is perfection; and that pressing was the earnest struggle of the apostle to reach it. Those who fervently desire an increase of holiness are sure not to be disappointed. If we desire wealth, or honor, or health, or any earthly good, God, in wisdom and kindness, may withhold it from us; but if we desire religious growth and maturity, he will delight to gratify us. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.† "If thou seekest her"—wisdom—another name for holiness—"as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."‡ In the absence of this desire—this longing after holiness,

* Phil. iii: 14. † Mat. v: 6. ‡ Prov. ii: 14.

there can be no spiritual growth. As well might the outward man thrive and strengthen without appetite or food, as the inward man be renewed and invigorated without the thirst for holiness, and the appropriate means of its indulgence.

3. *There is an increasing spirituality in the religious exercises of a Growing Christian.* The danger of most Christians is not that of indulging in gross immorality, or wholly neglecting the forms of religion. From these evils they are restrained by a regard to consistency, their reputation in the world, and their standing in the church. They know that profanity, intemperance or dishonesty would subject them, not only to exclusion from church privileges, but to the charges of hypocrisy or apostacy, and the scorn of virtuous men; and they recoil from these consequences. But professing Christians may substitute the form for the spirit of godliness without serious risk of exclusion from the church, or reproach from the world; nay, this very heartlessness may be commended by a respectable class of religionists as freedom from enthusiasm, and a proof of manly sense. This formality is the besetting sin of Christians. We perceive it in the coldness of their devotions, their neglect of religious duties, and the worldliness of their spirit and conversation. This evil is insidious, prevalent and pernicious—the reproach of the church, and the stumbling block of the world; but from it the growing Christian is exempt. He serves Christ with increasing spirituality and life. As he learns

more of Christ, he loves him more fervently; and as he loves him more fervently, he serves him more joyfully. The word of Christ is his meditation and delight; prayer is the very breathing of his inmost soul; the house of God is his chosen, pleasing home; the disciples of Christ are his constant companions; and to him the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light. Such a Christian you will not find in places of vain and dissipating amusement, or of questionable character; but you will be sure to find him, if Providence does not prevent his presence, in the prayer and conference meetings, and wherever spiritual good may be obtained or communicated. The Psalmist describes the spiritually minded man—"His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." That such a man should increase in knowledge, piety and usefulness, might be reasonably inferred; but we are not left to uncertain inference on this point. We are informed by the same sacred writer that "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper."* No more beautiful emblem of growth and prosperity can be furnished than a tree, standing on the fertile bank of a river, covered with green and unfading foliage, and yielding abundant fruit—such is the spiritually minded Christian.

4. *The Growing Christian has an increasing con-*

* Psa. i: 2-3.

viction that God is the supreme and all-sufficient good of intelligent creatures. That he can satisfy the desires of an immortal mind, is a well established article of every Christian's creed. God, the infinite fountain of good, can, either with or without means, fill, to its utmost capacity for bliss, the soul of man. "There be many that say, who will show us any good?" And the man divinely instructed will pray with David—"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."* The more holy any man is the less his happiness depends on creatures. The unregenerate seek their happiness wholly from the world. All their views, interests, aims and hopes are circumscribed by its narrow limits. They are utter strangers to every source of enjoyment which is not opened by its treasures, its occupations, or its amusements. Persons, who are sanctified in part, derive their happiness partly from the world, and partly from God. Their affections, aims and pursuits, and consequently their enjoyments, are divided. Their religious joys are occasional, imperfect, and mingled with secular pleasures. And this, with variations to the one side or the other, is the state of the mass of Christians in the world. But the matured Christian can be happy, not only without the world, but in defiance of it. Strip him of all creature good; and he can and will rejoice in the light of God's countenance. As in prosperity he enjoys God in all things, so in adversity he enjoys

* Psa. iv; 6.

all things in God. The Christian may be poor, despised, diseased, and cut off from all earthly hope; but, if his faith be strong and his love to Christ fervent, he will possess a peace which the vain and ambitious occupant of a palace might envy. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall the fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."* The prophet describes, in glowing and prophetic language, a famine, with all its desolating effects. There should be no vintage, no olives, and the fig-tree should not even blossom; the fields should be parched and verdureless; and the flocks and herds should perish. Can a scene of greater desolation be imagined? And yet, amid all this waste and ruin, the pious prophet could rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation. Now, it is clear, that as Christians increase in knowledge and holiness, they approximate that state of happiness which is above worldly contingencies, and depends only on God.

5. *The Growing Christian has an augmenting solicitude for the salvation of sinners.* This solicitude is an essential element of true piety. The man who is anxious for his own salvation, and unconcerned about that of others, is under the dominion of a cul-

* Hab. iii: 17-18.

pable selfishness; and differs widely from the man of Tarsus, who said—"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." One of the first and deepest emotions of a new born soul is desire for the salvation of a relative, a friend, an acquaintance, and the extending circle of pious solicitude soon embraces the human race. This feeling is in the young convert most fervent, but in the matured Christian most efficient. To ascertain the strength of this affection, we must inquire what sacrifices it will make, and what labors it will perform, for the attainment of its object. Estimate its power in the apostle Paul by this sign. His life was a series of toils, sacrifices and sufferings, voluntarily and cheerfully undergone, to secure the salvation of men, who, with few exceptions, hated, reviled and persecuted him. Asia and Europe were the field, his abilities were the limit, and his life was the duration of his exertions in this noble cause. To all these efforts and sacrifices he was impelled by an anxious, burning desire that sinners might be saved. So intense was this desire that he would willingly have suffered the most dreadful curse, if by so doing he might be the means of their salvation. "For I could," said he, "wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.* In many modern missionaries this sign of piety has stood out in bold relief. The severance of the ties which bound them

* Rom. ix: 3.

to home and kindred, their residence in inhospitable climes, their patient toils, and various sufferings, and their steady perseverance through years of discouragement, furnished proof of their longing desire for the salvation of souls. The growing Christian then must have an increasing solicitude for the redemption of sinners—a solicitude which will evince itself in appropriate efforts and sacrifices to attain its object. The Christian, who is "at ease in Zion," who can contemplate without anxiety her desolations, the prevalence of sin in the world, and countless multitudes traveling, with unfaltering and rapid steps, in the broad road to destruction, should assuredly know that he is not a growing, if, indeed, he be any more than a nominal, Christian.

6. *The character of a Growing Christian becomes more and more consistent and beautiful.* The young convert has many excellencies, and is likely to have many defects. He has more zeal than knowledge, more emotion than principle, more flowers than fruit. In the living, growing Christian these defects are gradually obliterated, and these excellencies are improved; and in the full grown Christian there is a beautiful symmetry of character, in which there is neither lack nor redundancy. His knowledge is unyielding without dogmatism; his fervor is effective without enthusiasm; his liberality is noble without ostentation; his good works are abundant without self-righteousness; and his piety is sincere without bigotry. His religion does not depend, as that of

many persons does, on times, and places, and circumstances, and impulses; but on deep and abiding principle. At home or abroad, among friends or strangers, in prosperity or adversity, when Christianity is extolled or persecuted, he fears God and keeps his commandments. His character, in short, is accurately delineated by the pen of inspiration—"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* The character in which are mingled, as the primary colors in the rainbow, truth and honesty, and justice, and purity, and loveliness, with whatever is of good report, with all that is called virtue, and all that deserves praise, is the character of a matured Christian; and to this consummation, devoutly to be desired, the growing Christian is steadily, and joyfully approximating.

Do you inquire, my dear brethren, *by what means your growth in grace may be promoted?* The question is important, and deserves a well-considered answer. If you are not *Growing Christians*, it is not because your heavenly Father has not made ample provision for your spiritual nourishment. "The sincere," or "pure milk of the Word," is the food which he has furnished for the sustentation and growth of the babes of his family—young converts—inexperienced

* Phil. iv: 8.

and feeble Christians.* He has also provided "strong meat" for "them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."† The ordinances of God—teaching, baptism, and the Lord's supper—are designed to convey the appropriate nourishment to the Lord's household—to open the Word to their minds, and impress it on their hearts. And the Holy Spirit, which the Father richly bestows on them that seek his influence, is commissioned to give efficacy to the Divine Word. They are "purified," which is but another word to denote their spiritual growth—"in obeying the truth through the Spirit."‡

I cannot, however, more clearly elucidate the means of promoting growth in grace than by giving a brief account of the religious improvement of brother Timothy Strong.

When he first made a profession of religion, he was young, poor, illiterate, encumbered with the cares of a growing family; and his associations were not favorable to his increase in knowledge and piety. He became, however, in a few years, notwithstanding all his disadvantages, an eminently intelligent, pious, and useful Christian. His spiritual growth was steady, rapid, and healthful. He died in mid-life, with a joyous hope of immortality, lamented by a wide circle of friends and admirers, leaving behind him the precious fruits of his labors, and a vacuum in the

* 1 Pet. ii: 2. † Heb. v: 14. ‡ 1 Pet. i: 22.

church and in the community which no man could fill.

I was led to inquire for the secret of his religious growth and influence. I made a pilgrimage to the "chamber where the good man" met "his fate," and the grassy mound which marked the resting place of his mortal part. Here I learned from his bereaved family the secret of his remarkable religious improvement and eminent usefulness. I got a view of his daily companion — his closet Bible. Oh, it was a sight worth seeing! It was a well-bound pocket Bible, printed at Oxford, with copious references. Never have I seen such marks of use in any Bible. Every page, and in some chapters almost every verse, had marginal references made with his own hand; and so intense was his application to the study of the Scriptures, and so tenacious was his memory, that he knew at a glance for what purpose every mark was made. He was a man of one book; and so thoroughly had he inscribed its contents on his own heart, that his children thought it quite a triumph when they could ask him any question from the Bible which he could not promptly answer, without referring to it. Nor did he study the Scriptures as a mere literary repast. They were received, with unquestioning docility, as God's message to him—his food, his treasure, his salvation.

Another source of his religious growth was revealed. *Prayer was his constant employment.* He had stated hours for secret devotion; and nothing but

stern necessity could divert from his plan. He might neglect his secular engagements—his regular meals—and necessary sleep; but he would not neglect secret prayer; for said he, "Daily converse with all the apostles would not be a substitute for it." As he resided in the country, he usually retired to some unfrequented and silent forest, where he might hold uninterrupted communion with his God. Here, in imitation of his Master, he would "offer up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears." Sometimes he would be so deeply affected by divine things, and his mind would be so entirely absorbed in the exercise of prayer, that his voice might be heard a distance of several hundreds of paces, when he was unconscious of speaking above his breath. A very deep impression was made on the minds of many by the solemn and earnest tones of his suppliant voice, in the distant and solitary woodland. It seemed, indeed, as if a worm of the earth was in audience with the majesty of the universe. At other times in the still hours of the night, supposing that none but God could hear him, he would rise from his bed, and spend long seasons in fervent supplications.

It can surprise no one acquainted with the excellence of God's word—its adaptation to nourish, strengthen, and beautify the soul—and the efficacy of earnest and believing prayer, to learn that brother *Timothy Strong* was a *Growing*, and that he soon became a matured Christian—as strict in the performance of private as of public duties—willing to make great sacri-

fices in the cause of Christ—preferring truth to popularity—treasures in heaven to treasures on earth—and faithful rebuke to indiscreet praise—that his life was singularly useful, and his death not merely peaceful, but triumphant and glorious—and that his loss was bewailed as a great public calamity.

But, why, my brethren, should not each one of you be as holy and as fruitful as was this good man? It was not his genius, his learning, or his peculiar privileges that made him a growing, consistent and useful Christian, but communion with his Bible, and communion with his God—privileges that may be enjoyed by us all. Depend on it, if we are not growing, fruit-bearing Christians, the fault is our own. We neglect the lively oracles, the unfailing source of light and wisdom, and the throne of grace, whence our strength, comfort and efficiency must proceed.

Let us then aspire after eminent attainments in the divine life. Here our aspirations cannot be too lofty, or too fervent. "The desire of power in excess caused angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity," or holiness, "there is no excess; neither angel nor man can come in danger by it."* "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God is Christ Jesus."†

Availing ourselves of the rich provisions which our

* Lord Bacon. † Phil. iii: 13–14.

heavenly Father has made for our nourishment and progress, we may all be growing, fruitful Christians, honoring our Redeemer on earth, and ripening for glory.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

* Jude xxiv: 25.

LECTURE III.

USEFUL CHRISTIANS.

THE subject of our evening Lecture, according to appointment, is *Useful Christians.*—Christian usefulness consists in diminishing the amount of sin and misery, and increasing the amount of holiness and enjoyment, in the world.

A *Useful Christian* is—

1. *A pious Christian.* His principles are sound, his affections are pure and fervent, his aim is upright, and his life is holy; he is, in short, a living, growing Christian. An ungodly professor of Christianity is a blot on the character, and an incubus on the efforts, of a church, and a nuisance in the world. Hypocrites, apostates, and disorderly walkers, have done more to mar the peace, retard the progress, and bring reproach on the character of churches, than all the infidels, opposers, and persecutors on earth. Judas, and Demas, and Simon, the sorcerer, proved a greater scourge to the early churches, than Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and Cæsar. An unholy church member exerts a contaminating, paralyzing influence on the body to which he belongs. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." The principles, the spirit, the

example, of such a man will grieve and discourage the good, seduce the unwary and inexperienced, and animate and strengthen the evil. But a godly man is a blessing to any church. True piety inspires the desire of usefulness; nay, the desire is itself an essential element of piety. While it inspires the desire of usefulness, it secures the confidence and esteem of men, which is an important means of influence. Let a Christian walk according to his principles, adorning in all things his profession, and it is interesting to notice how those who may have derided him as a weak enthusiast, or incurable bigot, will gradually come to respect and reverence him; and if, in the circle of their acquaintances, one must be chosen to arbitrate their differences, or to be an executor of their wills or a guardian of their children, or to watch at their bedsides in the time of sickness, he will be the first to receive their suffrages. Bad as is the natural heart of man, it renders a cheerful homage to goodness, if its proximity creates no invidious distinction, and if it assumes not the attitude of reproof and correction. The pious man has God's approbation, and may expect God's blessing in his labors; and without this no labors, however vigorous and well directed, can prove successful. "I," said Paul, "have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." If God delights in us he will grant us success. Observation has long since convinced me that a Christian's usefulness depends far more on his godliness than on his gifts. I once knew a brother of feeble and uncultu-

vated intellect, and of slow and stammering speech, whose life was exemplary, whose zeal was fervent, and whose efforts in the cause of Christ were diligent and faithful; and in the day of retribution, he will, I doubt not, have many stars in his crown of rejoicing.

2. *A consistent Christian.* Along with genuine, and even fervent piety, a Christian sometimes has such blemishes, or eccentricities of character, as will, in a great measure, prevent his usefulness. He may be sincere; but he is fickle, hot and cold by turns, sometimes building, and sometimes destroying what he has built. He may be conscientious; but he is morose; judging from his spirit and conduct, you would conclude that religion is a compound of gloom, austerity and fault-finding. He may be well meaning, but he is rude in his manners—acting as if he thought politeness, or courtesy, a sin, and coarseness a Christian grace—and as if to be a saint he must necessarily be a boor. He may be fervent; but he is eccentric, and deems himself meritorious just in proportion as he succeeds in making himself singular and ridiculous. He may be zealous; but he is indiscreet, and constantly saying or doing something which gives offence, or brings reproach on the cause which he would promote. He may, in fine, be a Christian, acceptable to God, but owing to his defects, or oddities, or errors, he looses the affection or confidence, of his acquaintances, and is precluded the possibility of benefiting them. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor: so doth a little

folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor."* But the Christian whose life is in harmony with his principles and profession, adorns the Gospel, commends the Redeemer, wins the confidence of his fellows, and is mighty to promote their salvation. He is a light in the world: he is salt in the earth. The hallowing influence of such a Christian cannot be fully estimated until the light of eternity shall disclose the results of human agency.

3. *An intelligent Christian.* "Do you think," inquired a self-conceited young preacher of a venerable father in the Gospel, "that God needs human learning to build up his church?" "I am sure," replied the good man, "he does not need human ignorance." The reproof was merited, and the remark wise. Knowledge is power, as well in the kingdom of Christ, as in the kingdoms of the world. Other things being equal, the most intelligent Christian will always be the most useful. Ignorance is one of the great evils of the world. Men are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. It is the mother of all the superstitions, which, under pagan or Christian names, have enslaved, corrupted and debased mankind. It is the prolific source of the errors which have agitated, divided, enfeebled and disgraced the Christian world. It is a barrier to human salvation. "My people," says Jehovah, "perish for lack of knowledge." That the earth is in the present day,

* Eccl. x: 1.

to a melancholy extent covered with darkness, none will deny. By the ordination of heaven, this darkness must be dispersed, by the ministry, not of angels, but of men—of godly men. Every Christian convert, whether male or female, in his proper sphere, and to the extent of his abilities, is required to be a teacher of divine things.* But how can a Christian be qualified to instruct the ignorant, to rebuke the perverse, to confute the erring, to fortify the wavering, and to comfort the desponding, without knowledge? "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." General knowledge is desirable for the Christian; for it disciplines and strengthens his intellect, and affords him the materials for illustrating and enforcing divine truth; but Scriptural knowledge is essential to his usefulness, and contributes to it in proportion as it is distinct and experimental. How important then the apostle's exhortation, and how appropriate, not only to the Christian evangelist and pastor, but the obscurest member of the household of faith.—"Study to show thyself approved unto God."

4. *An active Christian.* The believer is called to be a laborer with Christ. Had the Redeemer no other motive than to render him happy, he would at once discharge him from the toils, and remove him from the temptations, dangers, and sufferings of this life; but intending that he shall share in the honor of well-doing, the Master continues him on earth,

*1 Pet. iv: 10-11—Tit. ii; 4.

amid discouragements and trials, to finish his work The world is the field of the Christian's labors. The field is vast, and arduous is the work to be done. The world, enslaved by sin, debased by ignorance, and crushed with nameless ills, is to be converted to Christ. The moral desert is to be changed into a beautiful and fruit-bearing garden. Superstition is to be succeeded by knowledge, thraldom by liberty, pollution by holiness, and sorrow by peace and joy. But this great change cannot be effected by good wishes, kind intentions, or even by earnest prayers. The seed must be sown, and the field must be cultivated, or in vain do we expect fruit. It is by effort—direct, earnest, well applied effort—that Christian usefulness is secured. Nor must the believer, if he would fulfill his ministry, waste his sympathies on distant or irremediable woes; but betake himself to the removal or mitigation of such evils, and to the promotion of such good as lie within the compass of his abilities and opportunities. The man who neglects present, practicable, substantial usefulness, in his anxious concern for distant, unattainable, imaginary good, is a dreaming enthusiast or a heartless hypocrite. In such a world as this the Christian can never want the means or opportunity of usefulness. The sick may be visited and relieved. The wants of the poor may be supplied; the ignorant may be instructed in the way of salvation and of duty; the vicious may be reclaimed from their devious and dangerous wanderings; the weak may be strengthened in their combats with the world,

the flesh, and the devil; and the distressed may have the fountains of Gospel consolation opened to them. The useful Christian not only labors, but labors from principle—labors diligently—and labors to the end of life. Looking around him, he carefully surveys the field of his labor; estimates his qualifications and means for usefulness; earnestly seeks the divine guidance, aid, and blessing in his work; and is willing to be employed any way, or any where, if souls may be profited, or Christ may be glorified. If, then, brethren, you would be useful in your vocation, heed the words of the wise preacher—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

5. *A faithful Christian.* The Christian laborer who seeks popularity may, by prophesying smooth things, flattering the vanity, soothing the prejudices, and pandering to the passions of men, attain his object, at least, for a season; but let him not expect to profit souls or please God. He will have his reward—be admired and extolled—at any rate, tolerated and endured by his fellow creatures; but it would be strange if, without seeking it, he should obtain a higher reward. As the skillful surgeon probes, cuts, and cauterizes the festering wound of his patient, that he may save his life, so the useful Christian proclaims the most unpalatable truths, warns, remonstrates, seeks to arouse the slumbering conscience, to fill the soul with terrors, and to lead it to the most unfeigned

contrition and the most painful exercises of self-denial, that he may save it from death. What should we think of a surgeon whose false tenderness should impel him to apply emollients, when he should use the scalpel—to heal the wound slightly when he should probe it to the bottom? His tenderness would be cruelty; and yet this cruelty would be tender mercy compared with the conduct of the Christian teacher who should cry, Peace, peace to them to whom God does not speak peace! The sin of deceiving souls, whether it be committed through inattention, false compassion, or the love of public favor, is of no common turpitude. The ministry of Christ, our great Exemplar, was characterized by preëminent faithfulness. With illimitable knowledge, a manner of speaking, simple, familiar, beautiful, and striking, and a character free from every blemish, he might, had that been his aim, have acquired unrivalled popularity. Had he praised the virtues, vindicated the authority, and flattered the prejudices of the scribes and Pharisees, the chief priest and elders, they, like the common people, would have heard him gladly; then there had been no conspiracy to take away his life, and the malignant cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" had never been uttered. But Christ came not to please, but to profit men. He found the Jews laboring under a most dangerous infatuation, and he sought, at the sacrifice of reputation, ease, and life, to dispel it. He confuted their errors, unveiled their hypocrisies, reproved their extortions, and disclosed their impending

doom; and they hated him because he told them the truth. If, Christian brethren, we would be useful in our generation, we must cherish the Spirit, and copy the faithfulness of our divine and illustrious Leader. But let us not confound Christian fidelity, as many have unfortunately done, with sectarian bigotry, selfish intolerance, and unfeeling severity. True faithfulness is kind, gentle, baptized in the spirit of love, wounding only to heal, and denouncing only to bless.

6. *A praying Christian.* This thought has been clearly implied in the preceding portion of this Lecture, but, in consequence of its great importance, is entitled to a distinct notice. Prayer is the true secret of Christian usefulness. For this there can be no substitute: genius, learning, reputation, titles, industry, are all vain without it. It exerts a two-fold influence. It affects the suppliant himself. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of active, laborious, self-denying enterprize. The man who intelligently and earnestly prays for an object, comes forth, from communion with God, prepared, if it be attainable by means, to labor vigorously to secure it. But prayer not only affects the suppliant; it influences God himself. That God has bound himself, by infallible promises, to hear the prayer of faith, the Scriptures clearly disclose. The history of the church is the record of the power and triumphs of prayer. It delivered Daniel from the den of lions, and Peter from prison. It was while the disciples "continued with

one accord in prayer and supplication," that the spirit was poured out, in Jerusalem, with power, and signs, and wonders. In all ages, the men whose example, labors, and influence have proved a blessing to the world, have been men of prayer. The Messiah was not less a man of prayer than of sorrows. Let any one read the Acts of the Apostles carefully, and he will be surprised to find how prominent a place prayer occupied in the lives of the primitive saints. In modern times the men whose labors have exerted the most happy influence in the dissemination of divine truth, and the salvation of sinners, have been eminently distinguished for the frequency and fervency of their prayers. Ah, if the Christian world did but know the power of prayer, their aggressions on the kingdom of satan would not be so feeble and ineffective; but, with the ardor and heroism of the early disciples, they would rapidly extend the conquests of the Redeemer to the ends of the earth.

A beautiful and impressive illustration of the principles maintained in this Lecture, is furnished in the history of brother MARK EARNEST.

Many Christians fancy that were they endowed with shining and popular gifts, possessed of wealth, placed in circumstances favorable to their influence and activity, or invested with official rank and authority, they would find great pleasure in seeking to be useful. But this is generally an illusion. He that fails to improve one talent would fail to improve five. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in

much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."* The faith, zeal and energy which make a man useful in one sphere would make him useful in another. No Christian can be in a condition so poor, so obscure, and so embarrassed, but that he can find, or create, opportunities of usefulness, if he has "a mind to work." This will strikingly appear in the life of Mr. *Earnest.*

He was poor, by occupation a mechanic, and encumbered with the cares of a large and dependent family. He made a profession of religion while young, and for several years, though his deportment was not censurable, he gave no promise of uncommon usefulness. He seemed to possess an average measure of piety, which, unfortunately, in most religious communities, is very small. After he had been some years a church member, a very great and precious revival of religion commenced in the place where he resided. The church to which he belonged shared richly in the refreshing influence. The members, generally, were awakened, penitently confessed their sins, entered into covenant to serve God with greater fidelity, and made more vigorous exertions to promote the salvation of sinners. Brother *Earnest*, especially, seemed to be quickened into new life. Whether he had not previously been converted, or now only received a fresh communication of spiritual influence, I know not; but he seemed to be inspired with an extraordinary measure of zeal,

*Luke xvi: 10.

courage and activity. Those who had long known him could hardly realize that he was the same man. He was endowed with an ordinary intellect—his education had been very slender—and his habits had not been such as to fit him for usefulness. But every obstacle yielded to strong faith, a warm heart, a determined resolution, and patient efforts. He became, in a short time, one of the most efficient laborers in the revival. His modest, unpretending manner, and affectionate, tender spirit, and withal, his dauntless courage, enabled him to approach the enemies of religion without giving offence, and to converse with them concerning the interests of their souls, with a freedom and fidelity, which would have been denied to more prominent advocates of Christianity. But, if, at any time, his gentle and well meant approaches were repulsed, the meekness of spirit which he displayed, the increased importunity in prayer to which his defeat gave birth, were quite as likely to secure his object as his most earnest admonitions would have been. In his efforts to win souls for Christ, he entered with equal readiness the work-shop, the counting-room, and the parlor. Many were brought to repentance by his solemn and pungent admonitions, and his tender and impressive exhortations. Many through his persuasion entered the sanctuary, and were awakened and converted by the ministration of God's word. In the meetings for prayer, and the instruction of inquirers, he took an active and efficient, but unobtrusive part. To his wakeful attention, and timely suggestions, his

pastor was indebted for many precious opportunities of doing good. Only the judgment day will reveal the amount of usefulness which he accomplished in that revival season. Quite sure I am that many in that day will hail him as the honored agent of their conversion—their spiritual father.

Many years have passed since the close of that never-to-be-forgotten revival. Many who labored in it have gone to receive their reward. Many who were refreshed and invigorated in it have relapsed into their previous coldness and inefficiency. It was thought, and even predicted, that brother *Earnest* would soon lose his zeal, and cease from his activities. The prediction was not strange, considering how frequently the fervor of a revival proves evanescent. But it has not been fulfilled. Brother *Earnest* has several times changed his residence, occupation, and church connections, but his piety and labors in the cause of Christ, have undergone no material abatement. Every where, and under all circumstances, he has been the same humble, fervent, consistent, active, useful Christian. In the social prayer meeting, in the Sunday school, in the church meetings, in the public meetings for worship and the ministration of the word, his place is always filled, and well filled, if he has not some valid excuse for his absence. He is constantly devising, or executing, some scheme of usefulness. The fervency of his zeal, the uniformity of his conduct, and the disinterestedness of his labors, have secured for him the confidence and esteem of all who know him, and an

enviable influence for doing good. Such a man is a jewel—an example to believers—a comfort to his pastor—an honor to his church—a blessing to the community—a monument of grace—and a predestined heir of heaven. And yet he is distinguished not by his knowledge, fluency of speech, gift in prayer or exhortation, but simply by his earnestness of spirit, diligence in labor, and consistency of character. Nor let it be forgotten, that this spirit has been maintained, this labor performed, and this character matured, while he has been incessantly struggling to supply the wants of a growing and dependent family.

I will conclude this Lecture with two of three remarks—

1. No Christian, however poor, obscure, and feeble, is denied the luxury of being useful. Every servant of Christ has a work to do—a work which no man, nor angel can do for him. He should earnestly inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And having found his appropriate sphere of usefulness, he should occupy it, with a fervor, diligence and perseverance, proportioned to the greatness of his obligation to Christ, and the brightness of the reward of well-doing. It was, I think, the excellent John Newton, who remarked, that if an angel were sent from heaven to earth, it would be a matter of profound indifference to him whether he should be employed in sweeping streets, commanding armies, or governing nations, provided he was doing the will of God. Every sphere in which Christ places his people may be ennobled by

the faithful discharge of its duties. He that does the will of God does well. Whatever is done for the glory of Christ is nobly done. Let the Christian, then, not be ashamed of his position in the world—God has chosen it, and chosen it wisely—but aim to adorn it.

2. The success of Christian laborers is not always proportionate to the measure and fidelity of their efforts. Christ's personal ministry, though it was preëminently faithful, searching and powerful, does not appear to have been remarkably successful. It was the Messiah who said in prophecy—"I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain." The disciple is not above his Master. Labor is ours: success is God's. For various reasons he may withhold success from his faithful and beloved servants. He may design to make and keep them humble—to teach them that their sufficiency is of God—to instruct others to look beyond instruments, to the divine blessing, for success—or, in just judgment, for their perverseness and hardness of heart, he may refuse success to the most faithful ministrations among a people. This sentiment is in perfect harmony with our observations. We have seen ministers and parents, of gifts, piety and diligence, seeming to labor in vain; and others less gifted, and not more pious or faithful, laboring with great apparent success.

3. The reward of Christian laborers shall be proportioned, not to their success, but to their toil and faithfulness. In the day of retribution, Christ will

say—"Well done, good and *faithful*"—not *successful*—"servant." The Christian husbandman, who from a sterile soil reaps one sheaf, may secure a more abundant reward than he, who in a more fruitful soil, with less labor and care, reaps many sheaves. As God regarded with approbation the desire of David to build him a house, which he was forbidden to erect, so in eternity many an anxious desire to do good, that never found an opportunity of displaying itself in acts, and many a generous and noble scheme of usefulness, which from untoward circumstances, perished in its inception, will meet a bright reward; while many a splendid plan of seeming usefulness, conceived in vanity, prosecuted in self-confidence and ending in self-exaltation, will receive the stamp of God's displeasure.

LECTURE IV.

HAPPY CHRISTIANS.

In many minds piety is, unfortunately, associated with an austere disposition, a gloomy countenance, retirement from the world, and an unceasing round of penances, ever-flowing tears, and ever-resounding groans. This is a great and most pernicious mistake. The error, doubtless, has its origin in the tendency of depraved human nature to superstition. Various causes have contributed to increase the delusion. The conflicts, painful self-denials, and bitter contrition which frequently attend the commencement of a religious life, and which are clearly products of sin and guilt, are exaggerated, and placed to the account of religion. Christians of a gloomy temperament, who are generally sincere, and frequently active and efficient, give, by their morose temper and forbidding manners, a false impression of the influence of Christianity. The ascetic tendency of human nature, which, among Romanists, is cherished, and developed in penances and monkery—among Protestants, shows itself in excessive scrupolosity, fault-finding, and a war on innocent, but uncongenial enjoyments. The Christian, it must be conceded, has his troubles—troubles in common with

other men, and troubles peculiar to himself; but he has his consolations also. He has to bear the yoke of Christ; but the yoke is easy and the burden light. He has his tears; but tears have their own sweetness too. The afflictions of the people of God are preferable to the momentary pleasures of sin. Why should the Christian be melancholy? What is there in the service of Christ, the favor of God, or the hope of Heaven, to cover him with gloom? Why should he not be happy? Does he not possess all the elements of pure and permanent felicity? Let us, brethren, carefully examine into this matter. The elements of Christian happiness are—

1. *A guiltless conscience.* No man can be happy with an upbraiding conscience. Let Belshazzar, the impious King of the Chaldeans, amid the splendor and revelry of his palace, with changed countenance, loosened joints, and trembling knees, bear testimony on this point. What has caused his sudden agitation and panic? The fingers of a man's hand have inscribed on the wall of his palace mystic characters, which the wise men of Babylon cannot read. For aught that is known, they may predict the speedy deliverance of the king from the besieging army of the Medes, a long and prosperous reign, and the perpetuation of his dynasty; but conscience, calling to remembrance his intemperance, impiety, and presumption, changes him into a coward, and fills him with remorse and consternation. Peter, after the most boastful protestations of attachment to his Master, denied him at the first approach of danger, and just

as he was going to lay down his life for the disciples. Jesus turned a grieved, anxious, compassionate look on erring Peter; and the keenness of his remorse and the bitterness of his tears, should suffice to convince us of the value of a guiltless conscience. And who, beside a faithful Christian, possesses this blessing? Walking in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, he has a conscience void of offence toward men, and toward God. "He that keepeth the law, happy is he." The Christian may be falsely charged, his motives may be misunderstood or misrepresented, and all men may hold him in derision; but, like the mountain top, towering above clouds and storms, he is in perpetual sunshine—enjoys the smile of his own conscience, and the approbation of God. Of other blessings he may be deprived, by the malice of foes, or the chances of fortune; but of a peaceful conscience, neither men nor devils, neither fire nor sword, nor disease, nor death can deprive him. Other possessions need to be insured on earth, but this is insured in Heaven. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!" said God to rebellious Israel, "then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Behold the majestic Mississippi, as its current, deep, wide, and rapid, rolls on to the ocean—so abundant, flowing, and exhaustless is the peace of the man who hearkens to God's commandments.

2. *A clear and abiding conviction that God reigns in wisdom, righteousness, and faithfulness, over all*

his works. In a world like this, affliction, soon or late, must come, and come to all. Disappointments, losses, disease, pain, and sorrows are the lot of mortals; and neither faith, nor piety, nor prudence can deliver us from it. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." To see our property, which we have earned by toil, and amassed by economy, squandered by dishonest agents; to bury our cherished companions, or our idolized children; or to be doomed to experience the slow, painful ravages of incurable disease, is afflictive; and nothing can reconcile us to the calamity but the assurance that it is a divine dispensation, wisely and graciously designed for our spiritual good. This assurance every sincere Christian may possess. Afflictions are among the "all things" which "work together for good to them that love God." Chastisement yields the "peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Afflictions, light and momentary, work out for the Christian "a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory." This persuasion is eminently adapted to quell the murmurings, to dissipate the fears, and to soothe the griefs of a pious heart. The patriarch Job knew and exemplified its sustaining influence. "The Lord," he said, with a grateful heart, "gave, and the Lord hath taken away"—the Sabean and Chaldean banditti, who plundered him of his oxen, asses, and camels; the fire from Heaven which consumed his sheep; and the tornado which buried his sons and daughters, in the hour of their

festivity, under the ruins of their eldest brother's house, were but ministers, unconsciously fulfilling Jehovah's will—"the Lord hath taken away; blessed," continued the afflicted man, in pious resignation, "blessed be the name of the Lord."* We have in the history of Paul, the apostle, another striking illustration of the comforting power of this conviction. This eminent servant of Christ had a thorn in the flesh—some bodily affliction which was painful, rankling, and intolerable as a thorn buried and festering in the flesh. He besought the Lord that it might depart from him. The Lord did not comply with his request, but did what was better. He promised to his servant grace to sustain him under his affliction, and disclosed to him its disciplinary tendency. There was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. "Therefore," said the apostle, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."† My brethren, if we see Christ on the throne, all beings, whether good or bad, and all events, whether joyous or afflictive, under his control; and all ruled and ordered by him for the good of his church, and the glory of his name, we may well be submissive and cheerful in the darkest hour of calamity. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

* Job i: 21. † 2 Cor. xii; 11.

3. *Active efforts to do good.* Idleness is the bane of spiritual as well as of natural enjoyment. The possessor of millions must pine in wretchedness if he has no employment to occupy his mind, and give healthful, invigorating exercise to the body. The Christian who seeks mainly his own enjoyment, will miss the object of his pursuit. Christian happiness is incidental to proper Christian activity—the necessary fruit of well-doing. "Happy is he that hath mercy on the poor."* "It is more blessed to give than to receive."† There is a blessedness in receiving, but a higher, nobler blessedness in doing and imparting good. The Christian, who supplies the wants of the needy, or saves a soul from death, tastes a bliss which the selfish or indolent can never know. The desire of usefulness is among the elements of Christian character—an instinctive and mighty impulse of a new-born soul; and the opportunities of usefulness, which abound in the world, are to be ranked among the high and precious privileges of the sons of grace. It will generally, perhaps invariably, be found that the happiness of the Christian is proportionate to the disinterestedness and diligence of his efforts to do good. Show me a Christian full of doubts, gloom, and trouble, and I can pretty certainly draw his character. He is a religious epicure, seeking enjoyment rather than usefulness. He attends on religious privileges that he may be fed; but he desires to be fed, not that he may

* Prov. xiv: 21. † Acts xx: 35.

be strengthened for the performance of duty, but for the gratification of feeding; and nothing can satisfy his appetite but high-seasoned and stimulating food. No wonder that he should become a religious dyspeptic, emaciated, feeble, and an intolerable self-burden. But, if I wished to show you a happy Christian, I would select one who is diligent in business, as well as fervent in spirit; and who is diligent in business that he may increase the means and the measure of his usefulness, and more abundantly glorify his Lord.

4. *A confirmed hope of Heaven.* "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Subjected as the Christian is to many sacrifices, and often to severe persecutions on earth, if he were not sustained and comforted by a hope beyond the tomb, he would be the most wretched and pitiable of men. The hope of endless rest lightens the toils and burdens of life. The storm-tossed mariner, in the darkest hour of peril, is cheered by the prospect of reaching his destined port. Hope, buoyant hope, whispers, this tempest will be lulled, these clouds will be dissipated, favoring winds will fill the sails, and soon the smile and embrace of loved ones will make amends for all this toil and danger. Man is navigating the sea of life. Storms, whirlpools, and breakers abound in this ocean. How cheerless and melancholy would his lot be had he no hope of reaching the haven of security and rest? This hope the Christian enjoys. He possesses "good hope through grace"—the hope of "an inheritance, incorruptible,

undefiled, and that fadeth not away"—a hope founded on the divine promises, and confirmed by the divine oath—a hope which is "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

"A hope so much divine,
May trials well endure."

The Christian may have toils here, but he shall have rest in Heaven—he may have sorrows here, but he shall have joys in Heaven—he may have persecutions here, but he shall have a crown in Heaven—he shall have death here, but he will have eternal life in Heaven; and the firm and vivid hope of Heaven can sweeten the toils, heal the sorrows, and blunt the persecutions of earth, and triumph over the fear of death.

5. *The love of God in the heart.* "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."* It is not easy to explain fully the nature of this operation: it may be experienced, but not described. It is a sense of the divine favor, produced by the indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit, filling the heart with gratitude, love, and joy. To this blessed influence the Christian is no stranger. The Holy Ghost dwells with him to comfort, refresh, and invigorate him. He knows, by sweet experience, that "the kingdom of God," is not only "righteousness," but "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."† He has "fellowship with the Father, and

* Rom. v: 5. † Rom. xiv: 17.

with his Son Jesus Christ."* Sceptics, worldlings, and formalists may deride him as a visionary; but he cannot be cheated out of his own experience. He knows that he has found in the service of Christ, and in the pervasive, subduing influence of his Spirit, a light, a tranquillity, a joy, a rapture, and an elevation above the world, which could be found no where else. How delightful was the hour when first, with a heart crushed by a sense of its vileness and guilt, he trusted in Jesus, saw his fullness and glory, felt his pardoning love, and, with unutterable affection, devoted himself to his service. It was the joy of an espousal—the blessedness of a new and spiritual existence—which may well be described as "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." The Christian may, in after years, lament the absence of that ardent affection and lively joy which characterized his conversion to Christ; but if he has less ardor, he has more stability, and if he has less joy, he has more tranquillity. If he is, as he ought to be, a growing Christian, the love of God in his heart will be a perennial fountain of peace and joy—a fountain which no earthly vicissitudes can dry or pollute. With the pious Newton, he may sing—

"While blessed with a sense of his love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there."

* 1 John i: 3.

Concerning Christian happiness I have two remarks to make—

1. It is not *perfect*, either in kind or degree. Perfect bliss belongs to Heaven—is the consummation of the Christian's hope. The purest joy of the believer in the flesh is tainted with self and the world; and his highest rapture falls far short of the heavenly felicity. He learns from his own experience, as well as from the Scriptures, that the present life is a mixture of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, conflict and triumph, sunshine and clouds; and he is, or, at least, aims to be, content with such enjoyments as are allotted him on earth, and to wait for his full fruition in heaven.

2. It is greatly *modified by natural temperament.* Conversion does not involve the change of a man's natural temperament. If, in consequence of an unfortunate physical organization, he was, before conversion, gloomy, desponding and unhappy, he will not only retain this temperament after his change, but his piety will receive a coloring from it. This observation is true of every possible development of the natural temper. Christian happiness is sometimes diminished, or, for a season, entirely prevented—sometimes greatly increased—and sometimes rendered quite equivocal, by the physical temperament. If a man's temper is timid, desponding and gloomy, his piety, however conscientious and consistent, is likely to yield him but little enjoyment. If his temperament is confiding, sanguine and cheerful, his mind will readily receive religious comfort, and derive encouragement from the

divine promises or providences. If his mind is of a subtle, metaphysical, disputatious turn, his piety will almost certainly prove equivocal, and his enjoyment unsatisfactory.

In closing, I notice four classes of persons—

1. *Some are happy but are not Christians.* They are of a fortunate temperament, healthful, prosperous and cheerful; but they do not fear God, nor trust in Christ, nor even desire to be religious. Their happiness is worldly, unsubstantial, and evanescent; and yet renouncing God and Heaven, they take it as their best, their only portion.

2. *Some are Christians, but not happy.* I have already described this class. Their condition is safe, but unenviable. I have known many such Christians —sincere, conscientious and faithful, a burden to themselves, and of no great use in the world—worthy, indeed, of our confidence and love, but at the same time claiming our pity and indulgence.

3. *Some are neither Christians nor happy.* This numerous class seek happiness from the world, and find it not. Forsaking the fountain of living waters, they hew for themselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water. They toil, build, plant, accumulate, travel, study, feast, dance; but find by painful experience the truth of Solomon's words—"All is vanity, and vexation of spirit."

4. *Some are happy Christians.* This class I have aimed particularly to describe. I cannot, however, more appropriately conclude this Lecture than by

giving a brief account of an interesting specimen of this class of Christians. Sister Grace Bliss was poor in the things of this world, but "rich in faith"—"rich toward God." For the long period of twenty years she suffered from the ravages of a slow, painful, and incurable disease. She was seldom entirely free from suffering, and never from debility. Most of the time, she was confined to her room, frequently to her bed, and sometimes her pain was severe. It was, however, at all times, a source of pleasure and profit to visit her room. To say that she was resigned would convey a very inadequate conception of the state of her mind. She was cheerful—happy—joyous. No murmuring word ever escaped her lips. No cloud of despondence ever darkened her countenance. She was supported mainly by the kindness of friends whom her gentle and fond spirit had won, and who found pleasure in supplying her few wants; and this kindness made the most delightful impression on her heart, and called forth the warmest utterances of gratitude. Cut off by her situation from all active participation in efforts for the promotion of religion, she did not cease to cherish an earnest interest in the prosperity of the church of which she was a member, and the triumphs of evangelical piety in the world; and she took great pleasure in contributing a pittance from her very limited resources to the promotion of the cause of Christ. The philosopher would have found it profitable to visit her lowly dwelling. There he might have learned, better than he could have learned

in almost any other place, lessons of deep import—the power, excellence and value of the Gospel—the essential dignity of true holiness—the sustaining, comforting power of divine grace—and the utter worthlessness of all earthly wealth and grandeur in comparison with the benefits of sincere piety.

But the character of this lovely saint may be best illustrated by a story which I have heard concerning her. It bears striking signs of verisimilitude. Mr. *Markwell*, a pious and worthy man, resided in the neighborhood of *Grace Bliss*. He knew her well, and could but wonder at her uniform cheerfulness in poverty and suffering. He had an interesting group of children, for whose happiness, and, especially, moral and religious improvement, he felt constant solicitude. One day he said, "My children, to-morrow I will take you to see a *Wonder*, but I will not let you know what it is, till you see it." The children were greatly delighted at the prospect of seeing a sight, and their fancies were busily employed to find out what it might be. One guessed that it was a panorama—another that it was a menagerie—James thought it must be a fine picture—and little Jennie that it was a pretty landscape. All looked forward with irrepressible desire to the time when they should go to see the *Wonder*. At length the longed-for hour arrived, and Mr. *Markwell*, at the head of his gleeful band, set out to show his children the promised sight. His steps were directed to an obscure and uninviting suburb of the city. As they turned one street after another, among

the lowly and uncomfortable looking dwellings, the children began to inquire, "What can father find in this part of the city worth seeing?" Having at last reached a low, dilapidated and cheerless looking shed, Mr. *Markwell* stopped, and said, "My children, see that building—how low, and mean it looks—Do you think that any body living in such a house as this can be happy?" They all replied, "No!" It is not surprising they should have thought so. Their own tasteful, neat and spacious home, the abode of love and peace, was so unlike this comfortless shanty. "I have brought you here, my dear children," continued Mr. *Markwell*, "that you may see that happiness don't depend on fine houses, and fine furniture, but that one may be happy in poverty and suffering." They entered the humble dwelling. The cheap and scanty furniture of the room was clean, and well arranged, for the hand of a fond and faithful sister, the inseparable companion of *Grace*, was there. On a low cot, in one corner of the room, lay the *Wonder—Miss Grace Bliss*—emaciated, pale, feeble, suffering from a pain in her breast, and a difficulty of respiration. After the usual courtesies, Mr. *Markwell* said, "Miss *Bliss*, I have brought my children here, that you may teach them that a person in your situation can be happy." "My dear children," said she, as the habitual serenity of her countenance changed into a radiant smile, and the big tears glistened in her eyes, "I am happy, and I have great cause to be. You see me lying on this bed, poor, weak and suffering; but the

Lord is very kind to me. I have many good friends, who supply my wants—I have an angel sister, who nurses me—and I have a Bible, in which I can read God's precious word. I hope soon to die, and go to heaven. There I shall see Jesus—that's enough! I used to beguile many a tedious hour in singing—I can't sing now—my voice has failed—but there I shall sing like an angel. Even now, children, I have sweet foretastes of heaven. In the still hours of the night, I pray to my heavenly Father, and he fills my heart with love, peace and joy. I seem to be on the very verge of heaven. I would not change places with a king." She then repeated, with deep feeling, the beautiful lines of Wesley:—

"O, what are all my sufferings here,
If, Lord, thou count me meet,
With that enraptured host t' appear,
And worship at thy feet."

Mr. *Markwell* said to her, "Sister *Grace*, for what would you exchange your hope in Christ?" "For nothing," was her prompt reply, "but a seat at the right hand of God." "Well," continued he, if the Lord would grant you one wish, what would it be?" The children thought, surely, she would wish for health, or a good house, or some worldly blessing, and even Mr. *Markwell* supposed that she would wish for an increase of faith, or joy, or some spiritual blessing; but she answered, with an earnestness peculiar to herself, "I would wish that all the world might love Christ."

The children, after having placed in the hands of Miss *Grace* the money which their father had given them to pay for seeing the *Wonder*, returned to their home as much pleased as if they had seen a menagerie, a panorama, or a palace, and far more instructed and benefitted.

Years have passed away since the death of *Grace Bliss*. It was as peaceful as her life had been godly. Her bodily struggle was long and severe, but her soul continued cloudless, calm, and joyous. The grass has grown luxuriantly over her grave. No monument marks the resting place of her dust. But she is still held in fragrant remembrance by many who knew her.

And now, my dear hearers, we should all be happy Christians. God has made ample provision for our spiritual enjoyment. "The word of grace," "the throne of grace," and "the Spirit of Grace," are all accessible to us. With such sources of consolation open to us, we may well endure all the ills of life. If you are happy Christians, I sincerely congratulate you. Let us keep the prize of our high calling before us; and, with steady, undiverted feet, press towards it. A pleasant service, and unfailing sources of consolation here, with a glorious reward hereafter, should surely satisfy us. "May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen.

LECTURE V.

DOUBTING CHRISTIANS.

Christians, even the best, are, in this world, *imperfect*. As there are no two plants or animals, so there are no two Christians exactly alike. Moral excellences and defects are combined in believers in endless variety. All bear the image of Christ, but all do not resemble him in the same degree, nor reflect the same lineaments of his character. One is most remarkable for humility, another for love, a third for devotion, a fourth for conscientiousness, and so on, through the whole circle of features which constitute "the beauty of holiness." All these qualities are greatly modified by constitution, early discipline, habits, associations, and many other influences. Having described four classes of *Good*, I shall now proceed to delineate several classes of *Defective Christians*.

I begin with *Doubting Christians*. Of this class brother *Thomas Little-faith* is a pretty fair specimen. Having been long, and somewhat intimately acquainted with him, and having had many opportunities of observing his peculiarities, I will describe him, as the representative of his class.

Brother *Little-faith* is a *good man*. All his neigh-

bors give him credit for sincerity, conscientiousness, and uprightness of conduct. He is no stranger to the power of divine grace. His religious experience is deep, various and evangelical. He wept over his sins, fled to Christ for refuge, enjoyed the consolations of the Gospel, and earnestly dedicated his powers and possessions to the service of the Lord. He was cordially admitted into church fellowship, and has since done nothing to demand his expulsion from it, or to bring a strong suspicion on the genuineness of his piety.

But brother *Little-faith* is a great *doubter*. He does not question the inspiration of the Scriptures, the divinity of Christ, the necessity of regeneration, and the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, or, indeed, any vital doctrine of Christianity. All his feelings and habits incline him to the orthodox side in religion. His doubts have respect, not to divine truth, but to his own spiritual state—to the genuineness of his piety. He is generally, more or less, uncertain whether he is a child of grace. He has hours of light and confidence, but usually they are succeeded by days of depression and gloom. His doubts are no part of his piety; but a defect and blemish in his character. Had he more grace, he would have fewer doubts; and had he fewer doubts, he would be a better Christian.

I am aware that some Christian teachers maintain that doubts are incompatible with a state of piety. "Can a man," they ask, "pass from darkness to light, from death to life, without knowing it?" They

consider faith to be essentially of the nature of assurance. The subject is entitled to candid consideration. Certainly, persons, having a high reputation for piety, have been annoyed by doubts of their acceptance with God. It will, perhaps, be difficult to find a man, of serious, earnest piety, who has not occasionally had his mind clouded with doubts. If doubts are inconsistent with the genuineness of piety, brother *Little-faith* can lay no claim to it—a conclusion to which he might be easily led. I will endeavor to place this matter in a Scriptural light.

Faith, like other Christian graces, is, in the beginning, generally imperfect and feeble. It is capable of growth, and invigoration. "The apostles said unto the Lord, *Increase* our *faith*."* "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren," wrote Paul to the church of the Thessalonians, "as it is meet, because your *faith groweth* exceedingly."† But faith, which excludes all doubt, is full assurance—matured faith—and admits of no increase. In the Scriptures we read of "weak faith," "strong faith," and "the full assurance of faith." It is admitted that the "faith" referred to in these passages is not a persuasion of acceptance with God, but of the truth of his word; nevertheless, any doubt of the truth of his word, must imply a corresponding doubt of acceptance with him. If faith is weak—attended with doubts—then the persuasion of acceptance with God is equally

* Luke xvii; v. † 2 Thess. i: 3.

weak and unsatisfactory. If faith grows, then the persuasion of acceptance with God increases. And, finally, if faith is matured into full assurance, then the persuasion of acceptance with God rises to an undoubting conviction. This view of faith corresponds with the exhortations to self-examination, and the cautions against self-deception, with which the Scriptures abound. "Let no man deceive himself."* "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."† But if faith implies assurance—certainty—there is no need that a believer should examine, or try himself. He knows that he is converted—and needs not inquire into his state. It would be about as reasonable to exhort a man to examine whether he has a head on his shoulders as whether he is possessed of saving faith, if one is as certain as the other. What a man knows, he cannot doubt; and what he does not doubt can demand no examination—no farther proof. Every vital Christian knows that he has been the subject of a change—a great, internal and abiding change—but whether it is that divine, gracious change termed in the Scriptures the new birth, or conversion, he may be in painful uncertainty. He knows that he has faith, but whether it is that soul purifying faith—the "faith of God's elect"—which is inseparable from the state of salvation, he may seriously doubt. Indeed, faith, and a consequent persuasion of acceptance with God,

* 1 Cor. iii; 18. † 2 Cor. xiii; 5

exists in every conceivable degree, from the trembling hope of the young convert to the assured confidence of the matured Christian. Quite certain I am, too, that the persuasion of one's acceptance with God, does not always keep pace with the assurance that Christianity is true. There may be a strong conviction of the truth of the Scriptures, and this conviction may be overborne by the turbulent propensities of an unsanctified nature. The faith which justifies is not mere speculation—a cold assent to the truth of Christianity—but a cordial embracing of the Gospel as the means of deliverance from sin and guilt—an exercise which supposes repentance—a new heart—an obedient spirit. And whether our faith is of this character may well awaken intense anxiety, lead to thorough self-examination, and be involved in serious doubts.

But to return to the character of brother *Little-faith.* We are naturally led to inquire what are the *sources* of his distressing doubts? I am not so thoroughly acquainted with his life as to be confident of all the causes of his moral infirmity: I am, however, quite certain as to some of them.

His doubts may be traced in part to his *natural temperament.*

This is gloomy and desponding. He looks at the dark side of every thing. He sees nothing but spots on the sun; and these, he imagines, are portentous of dreadful calamities. He is full of painful anticipations as to the future; he dreads famine—

dreads pestilence—dreads wars—and dreads the overthrow of all order and piety. Nothing prevented him from becoming a Millerite, but his good fortune to reside beyond the excitement created by the Advent doctrine. A few straggling tracts and papers devoted to the support of Mr. Miller's peculiar notions reached him, and filled his mind with anxiety. For a while he could talk of nothing but the second Advent, and though he professed to reject the new doctrine, it was plain that he was in doubt on the subject. No wonder that he should contemplate Christianity under the most forbidding aspects, and his own character in the most discouraging light. That he should be more impressed by the threatenings than the promises of the Gospel, by the difficulties than the privileges of religion, is in perfect harmony with his natural temper. That he should be more encouraged by his attainments than dispirited by his imperfections, would imply a physical change, which grace does not effect.

The doubts of brother *Little-faith* spring in a measure from *false views of the evangelic scheme of salvation.* Whether from erroneous teaching, or from the unfortunate tendency of his mind, I cannot say; but I know he is prone to seek comfort and hope, not so much from the perfect sacrifice of Christ, the fullness of his grace, and the faithfulness of his promise, as from such marks of piety as he can find in his heart and life. He seeks consolation in the state of his own heart, rather than from the unfailing

sources of it, which God has opened by the death of his Son, and the revelations of his grace. He does not examine himself too closely, nor over-estimate his own weakness, imperfections, and unworthiness; but he does not duly meditate on the fullness and freeness of redeeming love, nor properly appreciate the faithful intercession of our great High Priest. His thoughts dwell on the virulence of his disease, almost to the exclusion of the divinely-appointed and efficacious remedy. If he could be brought fully to understand that he must be saved, if he is saved at all, not by his own worthiness, but the exercise of an humble, child-like, cordial trust in Christ—a trust which leads to an earnest obedience to his commands—he would surely have fewer doubts, and more religious enjoyment. But, alas for him! when told of a Saviour's love, he laments the hardness of his heart—when the fullness of the Redeemer's sacrifice is set before him, he anxiously searches in himself for some warrant to trust in it—when the inestimable privileges of the Gospel are freely offered to him, he fears that his unworthiness will exclude him from all participation of them—in short, when a free, and perfect salvation is preached to him, his remembrance of his past sins, and a sense of his present infirmities, seem to hide it from his eyes, or convert it into a means of more fearful condemnation.

Another source of doubting to brother *Thomas Little-faith* is *the supposed inferiority of his own experience* to that of other Christians. He had a neigh-

bor—Mr. *Wildman*—who had a remarkable experience, and was fond of telling it. Mr. Wildman had a weak judgment, with an ardent, excitable temperament. His religious education had been neglected, and he was ready to embrace the most extravagant fancies. His experience—if it may so be called—was certainly singular. He went to bed at night, entirely unconcerned on religious subjects—fell asleep, and dreamed that he saw heaven opened, and many of his departed friends there. It was a bright, beautiful and happy place, and Jesus invited him to enter in, and share its blessedness. He made an attempt to cross the narrow stream, which separated him from the joyous society, upset his boat, sunk in the stream, thought himself lost, and in the struggle awoke, in deep distress. He was now under strong conviction of sin. After spending several hours in prayer for mercy, he again fell asleep, and dreamed. He thought Jesus came to him, spoke words of consolation, and helped him into heaven, where he heard the songs of saints and angels; and he awoke in an ecstacy. He now thought himself converted, and gave indulgence to the most rapturous joy. I will not affirm that Mr. *Wildman* was not converted. His experience was exceedingly visionary and unsatisfactory, though he did not appear to be wholly destitute of religious knowledge and feeling. His life too proved to be as inconsistent as his experience was strange. "Ah," said brother *Little-faith*, "if I had such an experience as neighbor *Wildman*, I should be satisfied—I

should then *know* that I am converted." And yet every discriminating Christian who knew the two men, had far greater confidence in the piety of *Thomas Little-faith* than of Mr. *Wildman*.

Another cause of the doubts of brother *Little-faith* is, certainly, his *neglect of known duties*. Some of his neglects have come to my knowledge; and these, I fear, are but specimens of his failings. He usually refuses to pray in social prayer-meetings, though he possesses a fair gift in prayer. Sometimes he stays away from the prayer-meeting, lest he should be called on to lead in the exercise; and when he is present, he is apt to take the most remote and unobserved seat, to indicate that he is anxious not to be invited to offer prayer. He does not wholly neglect family worship —his conscience will not permit him to do that—but it is generally a task and burden to him, and he is glad of any plausible apology for neglecting it altogether. He occasionally takes a class in the Sunday school, but his attendance is so irregular, that he is soon deserted by it, or dismissed by the superintendent. Now it is not surprising that he should have doubts and fears. He nurses them by his culpable neglects. It would be strange if he did possess the full assurance of hope. It is contrary to all the principles of Christianity that the negligent, slothful and disobedient should enjoy strong confidence and hope.

I cannot speak confidently, but I have a suspicion that brother *Little-faith's* characteristic infirmity may be traced in some degree, to *secret sins*. The tempta-

tion to secret is much stronger than to open sins. The public eye, even the presence of a child, restrains many persons from sins from which the All-seeing Eye of the infinite Judge could not: A desire to appear consistent, to secure the approbation of friends, and to command the respect even of enemies, is a strong principle of action, and auxiliary to other, and better principles, in preserving good men from transgression. But this motive fails to exert any influence in withholding them from secret sins. The promise of concealment is one of the most dangerous motives by which Satan seduces men into evil; and good and strong men may fall under its power. Brother *Little-faith* is, I trust, good, but he is not strong. He is not so confirmed in religious principles, nor so fortified by knowledge, experience, and virtuous habits, as to be above suspicion. I do not mean to slander him —I would not set an example of evil speaking—but I desire to be faithful. He has not made me his father confessor; but I would kindly inquire, whether these groans, and tears, and distressing doubts, may not have their origin in some secret but evil indulgence? I should not propound this question, had not some facts, which I deem it not proper to mention, come to my knowledge, and did I not judge that Christians of his class may be profited by the inquiry. I would have him, and the class which he represents, earnestly cry with the Psalmist—"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the

way everlasting;"* and "cleanse thou me from secret faults."†

The *Effects* of these habitual doubts on the character and influence of brother *Little-faith* are obvious and deplorable.

He has, I need hardly say, but *little religious enjoyment.* He has occasional sunshine, but clouds usually cover his skies. Moments of joy, and months of wo seem to be his lot on earth. In seasons of religious revival, while other Christians are refreshed, filled with joy, and actively laboring for Christ, he, poor soul, is most uncertain and anxious about his spiritual state—instead of songs, he utters groans—instead of laboring to win souls for Christ, he is absorbed in concern for his own salvation. On one occasion, I was provoked with him outright. It was at the close of a most glorious meeting. Young converts, with smiling faces, and glad hearts, were sitting in a group, to receive a few words of parting advice from their spiritual fathers; and many anxious, weeping, broken-hearted sinners were in attendance to listen to appropriate instruction, and to share in the intercessions of the faithful. It was a heavenly time—every heart was moved. What Christian, under such circumstances, could think of himself? Why, brother *Little-faith*, who had been many years a professor of religion, came forward in the presence of the assembly, fell on his knees, and with piteous cries, re-

* Ps. cxxxix: 23-24. † Ps. xix: 12.

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quested that special prayer should be offered up for *him*. The request was sadly out of harmony with the occasion, and seemed to strike no responsive chord in any bosom; but it was in perfect unison with the man's character. A scene which filled other Christians with joy, served only to increase his doubts and gloom.

At another time, I saw the poor man on the very verge of despair. There was a lively state of religious feeling in the church of which he was a member. For a considerable time he had been in a cold, apathetic condition. Now he became pretty thoroughly awakened. He remembered the past with remorse, and anticipated the future with dread. He was seized with the conviction that he had committed the unpardonable sin. No arguments could convince him of his mistake—no promises afford him any relief—and no sympathy soothe his sorrow. I saw him in the house of God at the close of a searching and impressive sermon on the subject of backsliding. His countenance would have moved a heart of stone. It was almost black with despair. He could not weep, and did not dare to pray. All my efforts to instruct, encourage and comfort him were vain; and I left him seriously fearing that his reason would be overthrown. After a few days, however, he found relief from his distressing fears, was filled with joy, thought that he had never before been converted, and applied to be re-baptized. It was not long, however, before his doubts were as numerous, and his gloom as dense as ever.

Were the renewal of his faith admitted as a valid plea for his re-baptism, there is no telling how often it might be necessary to repeat the rite.

Brother *Little-faith* is a *very inefficient Christian.* I hope he will reach heaven, for although he frequently turns aside, he seems to be pursuing the right road. In the judgment of charity, he has "the root of the matter" in him, though it bears but little fruit, and that very defective. I fear, however, that he will never do much good in this world. His whole life is tinged, yea, dyed, with his constitutional infirmity. His time is wasted in needless *delays.* A disposition to procrastinate is an essential element of his character. He must long meditate, inquire, and weigh opposing motives, before he can decide the plainest question of duty; and when he has decided there is no certainty that his decision will not be reversed in an hour. He was five years under painful conviction of sin, before he found any comfort in believing; and then seven years elapsed before he could gain his consent to be baptized, and unite with the church; and, at last, he went forward in these duties with great uncertainty and trembling. This is about his usual speed. He is always intending, very sincerely, no doubt, to do better, but the time of action is slow in arriving. And when he does engage in any religious enterprize, he lacks the earnestness and vigor which are requisite to ensure success. I once heard him pray, when the church was in a most revived and pleasing state, and a person, judging from his prayer,

would have concluded that the last spark of piety on earth had been extinguished, and Satan had undisputed sway over mankind. It was made up of the most piteous confessions of coldness, stupidity, and barrenness; correct utterances, no doubt, of his own feelings, in which his fellow worshippers did not, at the moment, sympathize. He never projects any scheme of usefulness, and when from the demands of conscience, or a regard to his reputation, he aids in the execution of those planned by others, he never fails, by his expressive gestures, or more expressive words, to indicate his conviction of their worthlessness, or impracticability. I must do him the justice to say that he contributes of his substance, with an average liberality, to the support of his church, and the spread of the Gospel; but, with this exception, he is of little service to the cause of Christ.

Brother *Little-faith*, I must add, does, in some respects, *exert an injurious influence in the world.* His life is a libel on Christianity. His countenance, conversation and groans seem to proclaim that Christ is a hard master, his service a cruel bondage, and his servants the most oppressed and miserable vassals on earth. I know he would not dare to utter, and does not believe such sentiments—he believes the very reverse—but still his life gives currency to them. Actions speak more loudly than words. The world will judge of Christians more by what they do than what they say—more by the spirit they manifest, than the profession they make. This is not to be censured or

lamented. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The world, too, will judge of Christianity more by what they see of it in the deportment and spirit of its professors, than by its principles and precepts recorded in the Scriptures. What then must be the impression of Christianity derived by the world from the life of brother *Little-faith?* They must conclude that it is a compound of uncertainty, gloom and distress, fruitful only in groans, and promising not much more in the life to come than it yields in this. Such, indeed, was precisely the impression that it made on his sister, a sprightly and interesting young lady. "If this," said she, on witnessing some of his painful conflicts, "is religion, I wish to keep as far from it as possible."

Little-faith is the representative of a pretty numerous class of Christians. They may be found within, and straying around, almost every church. Most Christians, at one time or another, belong to this fraternity. Few of them, throughout life, escape this infirmity; but old Christians have less of it than young converts, and active, useful Christians are least likely to be affected by it.

I have a few words of counsel to offer to *Little-faith* and his brethren, which, I fear, will not prove acceptable, and which, judging from my past experience, are not likely to prove very useful.

1. *Think more of Christ and less of self.* You constantly dwell, in your meditations, on your own infirmities and short comings—your temptations and

dangers—your poverty and unworthiness; and these can yield you naught but shame, distrust and sadness; but think of Christ—his love to you—the efficacy of his atonement—the prevalence of his intercession—the faithfulness of his promises—the pleasantness of his service—and the glory of his kingdom; and these subjects will exhilerate your spirits, invigorate your faith, inflame your love, and fit you for a life of usefulness.

2. *Labor more, and groan less.* Your infirmity is a spiritual dyspepsy; if not induced, at least, greatly aggravated, by inactivity; and it can be cured only by an opposite *regime.* Groaning is but a symptom of the malady, and can never tend to mitigate its severity; but labor—laboring for salvation—for souls—for Christ, will tend to soothe, if it does not cure it. Rise then, brethren, and enter on your appropriate toils. The fields before you are white to harvest, and you are invited to share in the labors and rewards of the reapers.

3. *Pray more, and complain less.* You complain of your want of faith—want of love—and want of joy—of your evil thoughts—your sore temptations—and your disheartening gloom. We are tired of your complaints—they neither edify us, nor profit you.

> "Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
> To Heaven in supplication sent,
> Your cheerful songs, would often be,
> Hear what the Lord hath done for me."

4. *Seek a nutritious spiritual aliment.* If a vicious taste should cause you to read novels; or even exciting religious books, in preference to the Scriptures, no wonder you should be sickly and feeble. The unadulterated Word of God is the Christian's proper, spiritual nutriment; and if he reads, studies, and "inwardly digests" its sacred truths, he will be nourished, refreshed, and fitted for usefulness. The Bible Christian is not likely to be a Doubting Christian; but strong in faith, fervent in spirit, and ready to every good word, and every good work.

LECTURE VI.

TIMID CHRISTIANS.

In my last Lecture, I endeavored to portray the character of Doubting Christians. Closely allied to this class is another, which I propose to describe this evening—*Timid Christians.*

They are legitimate descendants of Doubting Christians. Strong faith would banish timidity from the Christian world. Why should any Christian be intimidated? Is not God his Father? Does not his Father love him? Will he not take care of him? Has he not promised to guide him, supply his wants, protect him, and fit him for heaven? Why, then, should he be afraid? Simply because he does not firmly believe, or trust in God. Had he strong faith he could, like Luther, in the darkest hour of adversity and peril, derive comfort, strength, and courage from the forty-sixth Psalm—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Timidity must not be confounded with *discretion.* Discretion is much more likely to be associated with

courage than with timidity. Discretion foresees dangers—and, without a sacrifice of principles, aims to avoid, or prepares to meet them. Timidity magnifies dangers in the distance, seeks, by pusillanimous compliances, to evade them, and faints at their approach. Paul was *discreet*, when, at Damascus, to avoid the rage of his enemies, he was let down over the wall in a basket: Peter was *timid*, when, at the first sign of danger, he solemnly denied his Master.

Timidity is an infirmity by no means new among the people of God. The children of Israel, delivered, by a succession of wonders, from Egyptian bondage, marched, after some delay, to the border of the promised land. Moses, by divine commandment, sent twelve men—from every tribe a man—to spy out the land of Canaan, bring specimens of its fruits, and report its condition to the congregation. They examined the land and returned. They gave a glowing account of the country and its productions—"We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." But they were greatly discouraged at its strength. "Nevertheless," said they, "the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great; and moreover, we saw the children of Anak there; we be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And the congregation, intimidated and discouraged, wept and murmured against Moses and Aaron. But why should they have been frightened? Had not God promised

to give them the land? Was he not able to fulfill his promise? Ought not the wonders which he wrought in Egypt to have convinced them of his power and purpose to protect them? Had the cities of Canaan been a thousand times more strongly fortified, and their inhabitants a thousand times more formidable than they were represented to be, the hosts of the Lord, relying on his promised aid, should have moved forward without fear or hesitancy. With such a leader victory was certain. But they, timid souls, were seized with a panic, and rebelling against Moses, and against God, were doomed to wander and perish in the deserts of Arabia. In this case we perceive that *timidity* was the fruit of *doubting*.

Had the Israelites believed in God, as did Caleb and Joshua, they would have gone up at once, and possessed the land; but "they could not enter in because of unbelief."*

Timidity is with some Christians an *occasional*, not a habitual infirmity. The history of the apostle Peter illustrates this remark. It was an act of shameful cowardice in Peter to deny his Lord on a mere suspicion of danger. This guilty conduct was contrary to the natural character of the man, and owing to a sudden and overpowering panic. The look of Jesus brought him to repentance, and restored him to his wonted courage. Afterwards when the apostles were brought before the Jewish Council, because they

* Heb. iii: 10.

"preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead," Peter nobly atoned for his momentary cowardice by his indomitable courage. "Whether it be right," he said to his fierce and unrelenting judges, "in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye."*

A Christian of this class, with whom I am well acquainted, and whom I sincerely love, I will introduce to the congregation—brother *Faint-heart.* He is naturally amiable, and grace has made him pious. It would be strange if he had many enemies, for he is surely one of the most inoffensive of men. If he suspected that he had wounded the feelings of a brother, in the most innocent manner, it would cost him a sleepless night. So guarded is he against inflicting pain, that he would carefully turn out of his path to avoid crushing a worm. Few men are more esteemed and loved than he, and less likely to bring reproach on the cause of Christ.

Brother *Faint-heart* feels a deep interest in the prosperity of the church of which he is a member—earnestly prays for it—and sincerely rejoices in all the good which others do; but makes very little effort to be useful himself. The reason is this—he sees insuperable difficulties and appalling dangers in every good enterprise. He saith, with the slothful man, "There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets." Propose to him any scheme for promo-

* Acts iv: 9.

ting the welfare of the church, extending the knowledge of Christ, or mitigating human misery, and he is almost sure to be pleased with it. The object is good—the plan to secure it is good—the agents to be employed are good; but the scheme he perceives, or fancies, is, from some cause, impracticable. Its friends will be few and lukewarm—somebody's feelings may be wounded by the enterprize—or, at least, he is not satisfied that every body will approve it; and he would, at present, prefer to have nothing to do with it. He is slow to engage in any good work—tardy in executing it—and quickly faints at discouragement. He is greatly wanting in the aggressive princi ples of Christianity; but should persecution overtake him, he would, probably, endure it with exemplary fortitude.

Brother *Faint-heart* is proverbial for having no mind of his own. Not that he is incapable of judging, for he possesses an intellect of rather more than ordinary clearness; but he is afraid to trust his own judgment. If he errs he would greatly prefer to lay the blame on the shoulders of another than to bear it himself. It might be reasonably supposed that he would look around him for some leader, on whose judgment he could repose confidence, and whose authority might release him from the painful necessity of forming opinions for himself. Such a leader it was not difficult for him to find. *Deacon Obstinate* is a prominent member of the church to which *Faint-heart* belongs. In character they differ widely. *Obstinate* is

self-confident, bold, unyielding, and overbearing; has frequently points which he is anxious to carry in the church, and which he would carry at any sacrifice; and is constantly seeking to attach to himself and his plans such members of the church as he can influence. Brother *Faint-heart* was a suitable man for his purpose. He visited him, talked much with him, and soon enjoyed the pleasure of numbering him among his adherents. *Faint-heart* is a man of more discernment and information than the *Deacon*—but what the latter lacks in judgment, he makes up in strength of will. In order to know how *Faint-heart* will vote in any case, it is necessary to watch the movements of *Deacon Obstinate.* However unreasonable and perverse the course advocated by the Deacon, he is sure to support it; or, if his conscience—he has a tender conscience—will not allow him to do so, he frames some excuse for staying away from the church meeting, that he may give no offence to his friend. This subserviency of the brother to the views of the headstrong Deacon would render him unpopular, did the brethren not know his weakness, and did he not possess so many amiable and redeeming traits of character.

I have already intimated that brother *Faint-heart* has few enemies. On one occasion, however, his want of courage involved him in serious difficulties. In private conversation he had been led into some severe, but just remarks, concerning a profession not very reputable. A member of the profession hearing of the

remarks, called on him, in an angry tone, and with menacing looks, demanding to know whether he had uttered such remarks. He remembered and approved them, and the public would have sustained him in proclaiming them; but the poor man was frightened out of his senses, equivocated, and made concessions derogatory to his character. This unmanly course involved him in fresh difficulties with those who would have firmly sustained him in a frank, bold, and honorable course. Throughout his painful embarrassments it was apparent that his difficulties arose from lack of courage to speak and act according to the dictates of his own conscience.

Brother *Faint-heart* has, I have no doubt, many relatives in this church, who warmly sympathize in his fears. The difficulties, dangers, and troubles of a religious life occupy their thoughts to the exclusion of the divine succors and the certain and glorious triumphs which are promised to the faithful. They do not, like the ancient Jewish rulers, love "the praise of men more than the praise of God;" but they are more discouraged by the threats of God's enemies, than inspirited by God's promises. They know, when they consider the matter, that the cause of truth and righteousness must prevail; but their fears triumph over their judgments. Were a church composed wholly of such members it would resemble, not a disciplined, courageous, and conquering army, but a timid flock of sheep, fleeing at the approach of danger, and easily destroyed by their enemies. Had the

primitive Christians resembled them in spirit, we should have no record of their persecutions, their stripes, their imprisonments, and their martyrdoms; nor would their labors and triumphs have been the wonder of the world. Christianity would have maintained a feeble strife, would have shed no blood to ennoble her cause, and would have perished in her infancy. Had Luther possessed this spirit, as Melancthon did, he would not have braved the thunders of the Vatican, and freed half of Europe from the spiritual domination of the Papacy. In short, had this spirit universally prevailed, the Inquisition had been saved from its labors of torture and death, and "the noble army of martyrs" had never been marshalled.

I would affectionately urge *Timid Christians* to obey the apostolic exhortation—"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." You profess to follow a Master, who, in the maintenance of your cause, laid down his life. Your brethren, in all ages, have meekly and cheerfully submitted to reproach and sufferings, when these have been incurred in the faithful discharge of their obligations to Christ. You are engaged in a good cause—the cause of truth, holiness, and human salvation; nor are you alone in this blessed work; the holy angels are your co-laborers, and God—Father, Son, and Spirit—is pledged for its final triumph. Can you be discouraged in such an enterprize? In this work you will need courage—moral courage—the courage that promptly

does right, regardless of frowns, ridicule and danger; and this courage is the legitimate offspring of faith. Seek to have clear and comprehensive views of the divine character, word, and purposes; and commit all your interests and ways to Him; and then, with the Psalmist, you may boldly say—"In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

In conclusion, I would guard my hearers against running into the opposite extreme—*rashness.* Peter, a man of extremes, was rash, when, with his sword, he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. The act could be justified neither by religious nor civil policy, but was the inconsiderate impulse of an ardent, generous nature, differing widely, as his conduct soon showed, from true courage. Courage is cool, calculating, as ready to flee as to fight, when fighting would be vain, and flight secure safety: rashness is hasty, heedless, and more likely to provoke than maintain a conflict. Timidity is the infirmity of a soft, complying, and generally amiable disposition: rashness is the exuberance of an ardent, restive, and irrascible temper. Timidity degenerates into meanness; rashness leads to violence and injustice. Christians are, perhaps, more in danger of rashness than timidity; and I beseech such as are of a quick and ardent temper to be on their guard, lest in some moment of excitement they should say or do something which years of painful regret cannot atone for.

LECTURE VII.

INDOLENT CHRISTIANS.

Man was formed for employment. He is endowed with powers, bodily and intellectual, upon whose proper exercise depend his enjoyment, usefulness and dignity. When he came from the Creator's hand, pure, lovely and vigorous, the noblest creature of the earth, he was placed "in the garden of Eden to dress it, and to keep it." This occupation, unattended with fatigue and care, cultivated his taste, expanded his powers, and promoted his happiness. When he ate the forbidden fruit of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," he was expelled from Eden, the ground was cursed with barrenness for his sake, and he was doomed to eat bread in the sweat of his face. The law requiring him to take exercise was not revoked, but became a curse. Refreshing employment was changed into labor, with its inevitable effects, fatigue, care and pain. Grace, which makes many and important changes in man's condition, real and relative, does not free him from the law of labor, but converts it into a blessing. The Christian is a laborer. He serves a Master whose life was one of incessant toil, anxiety and suffering. "I must," said the Redeemer, "work the works of

him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."* Transcendently important is the work to which the believer is called. He is a laborer "together with God."† He toils to promote the glorious plan for the success of which Jesus died on Calvary, and reigns in heaven. He has a great work to perform for *himself*—a work which neither men, nor angels, nor God can perform for him. He must work out his "own salvation with fear and trembling."‡ And this arduous task will demand incessant watchfulness, prayer, self-denial, obedience, and perseverance to the end of life. He must "strive"—agonize—"to enter in at the strait gate."§ The prize is for him that wins—the crown for him that overcomes. Christ has no idler in his vineyard. The Christian has a most important work to do for *others*. He is continued on earth for the purpose of *doing* as well as *getting* good. He is in a world filled with sin, ignorance and misery. Souls are perishing around him for lack of knowledge. He is divinely appointed to hold "forth the word of life;"‖ and it is at his peril, if he fails to do it. Every Christian is required, according to his ability, and opportunities, to teach men the way of life. After the martyrdom of the evangelist Stephen, "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of

* John ix: 4. † 1 Cor. iii: 9. ‡ Phil. ii: 12.
§ Luke xiii: 24. ‖ Phil. ii: 16.

Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.—Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."* The believing husband, or wife, is bound to labor for the conversion of the unbelieving companion. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"† Every one who has heard the gospel message is authorized to proclaim it. "And let him that heareth say, Come."‡ The believer is required not merely to publish the Gospel with his lips, but to illustrate and commend it by his life, and by all the means in his power to promote its diffusion and success in the world. To fulfill his high commission, he must be a laborer—must cultivate the Lord's vineyard—must fight the Lord's battles. It will be needful for him to prepare for the work—enter upon it with resolution—prosecute it with fidelity—and continue it to the end. The ignorant must be instructed—the perverse reproved—the feeble strengthened—the sorrowful comforted—the wavering established—the wandering reclaimed—and the Gospel published in all the world. Every Christian is not called to be a pastor—a missionary—a translator of the Scriptures—or a defender of the faith; but the feeblest and the most obscure has his appropriate work, and performing it faithfully, he will receive the crown of life. An efficient church is aptly compared "to a company of

* Acts viii: 1, 4. † 1 Cor. vii: 16. ‡ Rev. xzii: 17.

horses in Pharaoh's chariot"*—all active, spirited, well broken, and moving in harmony.

I have briefly described what all Christians should be and do; but, alas! many are *indolent*. They are not wholly inactive; for then would they be dead—unworthy the name of Christians. They are sluggish, slothful and inefficient servants. They travel the right road, but travel slowly. They labor in the Lord's vineyard; but laboring without earnestness and stability of purpose, they accomplish but little. They are pregnant with schemes of usefulness, to which they never give birth. They have laid the foundation of many fair buildings, which they have lacked the industry to finish. And most of the good which they accomplish loses much of its value, by the delay and vexation in its production. In fine, they are living, but sickly Christians—reversing the prophetic description, they *run* and *are weary;* and they *walk*, and *are faint.*†

Elder *Ephraim Doolittle* is a very respectable representative of this class of Christians. Having known him intimately from his youth, I will make no apology for delineating his character. He professed religion just as he reached manhood. Of his sincerity none ever entertained a doubt. His religious experience was clear, pungent and Scriptural. In uniting with a church, he made such sacrifices, and submitted to reproach with such meekness, as inspired full con-

* Song of Sol. i: 9. † Isa. xl: 31.

dence in his piety. His genius, education, zeal, and social position gave promise of great usefulness. It was not long before he entered, at the solicitation of his brethren, the Christian ministry. A bright career of usefulness seemed at once to open before him. His gifts were popular; and, for a time, his labors were eminently successful. A rich blessing every where attended his ministrations. No preacher of his age commanded larger congregations, or was held in higher estimation. For a few years his labors were desultory and itinerant. During this period the vice, which was afterwards so seriously to impair his usefulness, did not strikingly exhibit itself. His intimate friends knew, indeed, that he was fond of ease, self-indulgent, and strongly inclined to indolence; but they hoped that the responsibilities of a pastorate would call into exercise the fine powers of his mind, and make him more diligent in his high calling.

A fact will serve to show the evil influence which *Doolittle's* sluggish habits were likely to exert among a plain, industrious people. He had a neighbor named *Swift*. I was speaking to him of the fine abilities, and extensive popularity of Mr. *Doolittle*. He said, thoughtfully, "I have lost all confidence in him." Surprised at such a remark, I inquired, "Why?" He replied, "I went to his house not long since, after I had eaten my breakfast, and found him in bed." "Perhaps," said I, "he was unwell." "Unwell, indeed!" answered *Swift*, "he is *lazy*." I do not justify the judgment of *Swift*—it was unwarrantable and

harsh—nor did he mean all that his language signified; but I mention the fact to show by what slight considerations the influence of a minister may be diminished.

The first settlement of brother *Doolittle* as a pastor was in a pleasant, prosperous town. He commenced his labors with the most encouraging prospects of success. His pulpit services were highly acceptable, and his easy manners, and sociable habits made him a welcome visitor in every family. His congregations were large, and several valuable accessions were made to the church. It was not long, however, before there was an obvious decline in the power of his ministry. His sermons lacked variety. His favorite arguments, anecdotes, and figures of speech were repeated, until they became familiar to his hearers. Occasionally, he would preach a new sermon, which would evince his intellectual resources, and prop his tottering reputation. But this would be followed by a succession of discourses, almost every topic of which was commenced with the ominous words, "As you have often heard me say before." It was clear, to the observant, that he could not long retain his position. His habits were notoriously indolent. He was rarely dressed in time for breakfast—read novels, when he should have studied his Bible—lounged at a hotel, when he should have visited the members of his congregation—spent the time in idle gossip, which he should have devoted to preparation for the pulpit—and showed more concern to have

good dinners, than to comfort the afflicted. Matters were drawing to a crisis. The influence of the pastor was waning, and the dissatisfaction in the flock was increasing. An event soon occurred which resulted in their separation.

One Sabbath morning, Elder *Doolittle* preached a sermon of unusual power and beauty. He outpreached himself. His congregation were taken by surprise. They had scarcely ever heard a sermon of equal richness and splendor. It inspired hope that the pastor might redeem his character, and influence. In a few days a young preacher, of no reputation, visited the town, and was invited by the pastor to occupy his pulpit. By a singular coincidence, the novice took the same text from which the congregation had listened to so brilliant a sermon on the preceding Lord's day. Their attention was instantly quickened. They were curious to compare the two discourses, supposing that the imperfections of the latter would more strikingly display the excellencies of the former. The first sentence uttered by the young minister was precisely that with which *Doolittle* commenced his sermon. There was now a breathless interest in the assembly. They were amazed to hear the same sermon, word for word, which they had listened to on the previous Sunday with so much pleasure. *Doolittle* sat in the pulpit, behind the young plagiarist, in full view of the congregation. The discourse was as full and sparkling as ever, but it was enjoyed neither by the church nor the pastor. A smile played upon the countenances

of many of the worldly as they marked the changing hues in the face of Elder *Doolittle*. I need not attempt to describe his feelings. They were far from being enviable. Next morning, he found on his desk a volume of Saurin's sermons, opened at the very discourse which had gained him so much praise, and led to such painful mortification. The poor man's reputation could not survive in that place the shock which it received. It is needless to note the events that followed. He soon changed his residence.

The next settlement of Elder *Doolittle* was with the *Sleepy River* church. Never was a connection more congenial. The church is situated in a rural district. Its members were mostly farmers, and persons belonging to their families, who lived in retirement, and, if not rich, were desirous and struggling to be. They had been badly trained. Their meetings for religious worship were infrequent, their scriptural knowledge was very meagre, and their discipline was exceedingly loose. They preferred exciting to instructive preaching, and had no relish for practical discourses. Their new pastor was deemed a prodigy in talents; indeed, he was far superior to the elder who preceded him, and by whose exertions the church had been raised to its present position. The commencement of Elder *Doolittle's* labors was signalized by a revival in the church, and a considerable increase of its membership. But soon the excitement passed away, and both pastor and people settled down into a quiet, satisfied state. He usually reached the place of meet-

ing late—frequently an hour after the appointed time. His sermons were stereotyped. The same texts, trains of thought, illustrations, modes of expression, and especially stories, were repeated until they became familiar to all the congregation, except such as had the most treacherous memories. At long intervals, the monotony of his ministrations was broken by an original and forcible sermon on some controverted point, which showed what eminence he might have attained by the diligent improvement of his gifts. After the Lord's day services were over, he usually went home with some member of the church; and, it was observed, that he always went where he was likely to fare best. He refused to dine with sister *Poor*—whose daughter was sick, needed religious instruction, and was desirous to see him—but went farther, and over a worse road, to dine with sister *Rich*, because she kept a sumptuous table. The church would have become extinct under his ministry, but for an occasional revival, through the labors of a visiting evangelist, and accessions from other churches by certificates of dismission.

Never did a pastor more fully succeed in infusing his own spirit into his flock than did *Doolittle*. Their history furnishes a striking exemplification of the adage, "Like priest, like people." He is greatly beloved by his church, for he is, in truth, a lovely man. They contemplate him as a model of Christian excellence. They do not hope to equal him—to excel him they think impossible. They come to the meetings

late, some of them sleep soundly during the services, all praise the sermons, and return to their homes to eat warm, rich dinners, deeming themselves highly favored if they can have the company of their pastor. They have no Sunday-school, no prayer-meeting, and no week-day lecture. Their house of worship, scarcely large enough for their accommodation, is inconvenient, unsightly, and dilapidated. They promise their pastor a small salary, and never pay it. To benevolent enterprizes they contribute nothing systematically. They are constantly growing richer, and their contributions for religious objects are as steadily diminishing in an inverse ratio. They dislike agencies—prefer contributing without solicitation, and in their own way; but their contributions are niggardly—unworthy of themselves, the gospel which they profess to believe, the objects for which they are intended, and the Saviour whose name they bear. They give copper when they should give silver, and silver when they should give gold; and were their offerings increased a hundred-fold, their means of enjoyment would not be diminished. A smile was provoked at a session of the Association by an accidental omission of a word in their church letter. The clerk read with great distinctness, "The *Sleepy* church sendeth Christian salutation." All were amused at the appropriateness of the title.

Elder *Doolittle* is a good man. A more amiable, inoffensive man, I have never known. Of a dishonorable act, he has never been charged. All his faults

have sprung from self-indulgence. He has always felt and lamented the evil; and frequently has made earnest, ineffectual efforts to correct it. Once he seemed likely to form the habit of early rising. For several months he rose with the sun, and found great refreshment in the morning breezes; but a slight indisposition seemed to demand the indulgence of his old habit, and the first indulgence extinguished all hope of his reformation. At another time he made a vigorous effort to subdue the fondness for chewing tobacco. He thought, for a while, that he had gained an easy triumph. But to reward himself for his self-denial, he indulged occasionally in smoking a cigar. This indulgence soon grew into a habit. This habit, proving quite as expensive and injurious as chewing, was changed into the practice of snuff taking. And this again led to chewing. So the reformation, so hopefully begun, instead of curing one evil habit, added two others equally pernicious and offensive.

It is not easy to decide in what degree *Doolittle* should be pitied or blamed for his infirmities. They originate in his temperament. He is of a soft, pliable, sluggish nature. His intellect is vigorous when aroused, but he is almost free from ambition. His education, too, was unfavorable to the development of his powers, and the formation of active habits. He was indulged from his childhood—slept when he should have studied, and played when he should have labored. His studies were desultory; and, consequently, his attainments were various rather than profound. Under

a different system of discipline, he would have been far better fitted for the laborious duties of life. It must be admitted, too, that his peculiarities have been intensified by his connection with the *Sleepy River* church. Had his circumstances impelled him to study he would have made far greater progress, than he has done, in the acquisition of knowledge, and in the power of his ministry. But the church are more than satisfied, they are enraptured, with his feeblest efforts. No repetitions weary them. All attempts to instruct them in the higher branches of Christian doctrine would, with their present tastes and habits, be lost on them. They deem their pastor the prince of preachers; and he is pleased that he occupies a position, in which he can sustain himself with credit, without the unsupportable fatigue of studying, or seriously interfering with the ease and social pleasure which he so much values.

Elder *Doolittle* is now an old man. He spends his time in eating, drinking, smoking, lounging, easy exercise, social converse, day dreaming, sleeping, and repeating weekly, to his admiring church, the sermons which he prepared in his youth. I am grieved when I think of him. He might have been a preacher of the first class: he scarcely ranks with the third. Nature did much for him—he has done but little for himself. He has been, in some measure, useful—he might have been eminently so. He occupies an obscure position—he might have filled a prominent one. His influence will be almost limited to his life time—he might

have exerted a deepening and widening influence on future generations. He is much beloved in the narrow sphere of his labors—he might have been extensively admired and honored, as well as loved. His study furnishes an instructive lesson for young ministers. There you may see plans of sermons, not filled out—treatises on important subjects, with a few pages written, and the rest in loose, and unintelligible notes —and schemes for usefulness projected and recorded, that have never been executed. All these are sad mementoes of his indolence, and instability of purpose. Had these sermons, and treatises been fully and carefully written out, and these schemes of usefulness been vigorously and diligently prosecuted, they would be enduring monuments of his talents, and give him rank among the benefactors of the age. How different would his life have been from what it really is!

In conclusion, I will address three classes of professing Christians—

1. *The indolent.* I will not, my brethren, affirm that your *salvation is impossible.* I know that we should "labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of" God.* A living faith shows itself by good works. An idler can have no part in the kingdom of Christ. But you, it is to be hoped, are not entirely indolent. In what measure your sluggishness and inactivity may be ascribed to your unfortunate temperament, early training, and habits formed pre-

*2 Cor. v: 9.

viously to your conversion, only God knows. Take care that the doom pronounced on the "wicked and slothful servant" be not yours. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* You may, indeed! be saved, but you cannot be *useful.* Success is the fruit of labor. Idleness yields nothing but misery and shame. If all Christians were like you, the kingdom of God would be overthrown in the earth, and all efforts to arrest the progress of sin would cease. You may be saved, but you cannot be *respected.* You may be pitied for your infirmities, endured for your inoffensiveness, and even loved for your amiableness, but who can respect or venerate the idle and worthless? Arouse, then, from your lethargy. Motives high as heaven, deep as hell, vast as eternity, press you to engage in earnest, persevering, heaven-directed labors. What you do, must be done quickly. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."†

2. *Those who are diligent to little purpose.* This is a numerous class, abounding within, as well as without, the churches. I doubt not many of this sort now hear me. You, my dear friends, obey the divinely inspired caution, "Not slothful in business." Whatever promotes your health, comfort, wealth, respectability and influence receives prompt attention. You

* Mat. xxv: 26. † Eccl. ix: 10.

are emphatically men of business—thoughtful, enterprising, industrious, persevering, and economical. Every hour finds you at your post. Every secular interest is properly secured. Now, this is commendable. It is not the purpose of Christianity to arrest the needful occupations of life. It cannot be justly charged with the manifold evils of monasticism. It demands no seclusion from the world, and no abandonment of the useful and ornamental pursuits of life. Were all its claims duly respected, there would be no injury but a decided advantage to the industrial interests of the world. Agriculture would still reap her harvests, the arts would flourish, in full vigor, and commerce would spread her sails, and freight her treasures on every sea. But this, my friends, is your condemnation, that while every earthly, transitory interest receives prompt and earnest attention, the vast and imperishable interests of the soul are wholly neglected, or command but slight and momentary regard. You are careful and troubled about many things, but forget the "one thing needful." Your bodies are fed, adorned and protected—your families are bountifully provided for—your houses are painted, insured and guarded—the beasts of your stalls have their daily supplies—but your souls, in which are concentrated all your real worth, and all your hope for the future, are sadly neglected. Alas! they are worse than neglected. They are cruelly murdered. By your sins, of omission and commission, and, especially, by your rejection of the Gospel of Christ, you are doing what

you can to exclude them from the kingdom of heaven, and plunge them into hell. If you were as considerate, diligent and zealous concerning the interests of your souls as of your bodies—of eternity as of time —you would be shining Christians, and secure an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. I expostulate with you in the words of a poet:

> "Why will ye waste on trifling cares
> That life which God's compassion spares,
> While, in the various range of thought,
> The one thing needful is forgot?"

3. *Those who are diligently and usefully employed.* You are Christ's laborers. You labor in his field, under his guidance, and prompted by love to him, and the hope of a reward from him. Your toils are arduous, taxing the energies of your minds and bodies. You are frequently discouraged in your efforts to do good, by the difficulty of the work, a sense of your unfitness for it, providential hindrances in it, the perverseness and ingratitude of those whose welfare you would promote, the indifference of professing Christians, and your want of success. But be "not weary in well doing; for in due season" you "shall reap, if" you "faint not."* Your toil may be severe, but it will not long continue. Your reward may be deferred, but it is certain, and it will be timely, great and enduring.

* Gal. vi: 9.

LECTURE VIII.

INCONSTANT CHRISTIANS.

I SHALL proceed at once to portray *Inconstant Christians.* The best Christians, in their best estate, are, in some degree, inconstant. Only God is immutable. The feelings, plans, efforts and views of the most matured and established Christian are variable. But by *Inconstant Christians*, I mean those who are remarkable for their instability—who are governed by circumstances, or impulse, rather than principle. Other Christians change, of necessity, as their knowledge increases, as time advances, and as their interests, responsibilities and circumstances vary; but *Inconstant Christians* are given to change—change frequently—change greatly—change from no conceivable reason, but the mere love of changing. The Christians of the Galatian churches belonged to this class. When Paul came among them, they received him as a messenger of God, and, so fervent was their love for him, that had it been possible they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him; but afterwards they deemed him their enemy, because he told them the truth.* They received the

* Gal. iv: 14, 16.

Gospel from the apostle, but were soon perverted by artful, Judaizing teachers. "I marvel," said Paul, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ."* The chain of apostolical succession has probably been broken in many links; but that there has been a regular and unbroken succession of *Inconstant Christians* in the churches of Christ, will scarcely be denied.

I cannot better make you acquainted with the defects of this class of Christians, than by describing the character of a well known member of it—brother *Fickle*. I was present when he professed conversion; and his case seemed to be a most remarkable instance of the power of divine grace. He had been a bold and reckless transgressor—his convictions were pungent, and his penitence was, apparently, sincere and deep—and sudden as the lightning, hope and joy flashed on his mind. He had no doubts, no timidity, no apprehensions, his countenance was bright, he praised aloud the God of salvation, and exhorted all his friends to seek mercy. He was promptly baptized, and added to the church. Great hope of his usefulness was entertained by the brethren. Certainly, he promised well. He was intelligent, respectable, energetic, and, above all, eminently zealous.

A sad declension, however, soon occurred in the

* Gal. i: 6-7.

church. Good men, and true, mourned, and prayed, and struggled. I shall never forget the earnestness, and grief, and diligence of old brother *Holdfast*, who has since gone to his reward, in this time of darkness and trial. He was a great comfort to me. But brother *Fickle* imbibed the spirit of the world, entered into absorbing speculations, and violent political excitements, was rarely seen in the sanctuary, never at the prayer meeting, neglected all his religious duties, participated in several disgraceful affrays, and was on the very point of apostasy and ruin. His brethren talked with him, warned him of his danger, and sought to reclaim him; but their labor was vain. About this time, a delightful and spreading revival commenced in the church. Soon brother Fickle seemed to be re-converted. The change in him was not less remarkable than it was at first. He was a new man—his heart was tender—he confessed his sins, with great apparent humiliation—he sang among the loudest and most devout—he prayed, very acceptably, in meetings for social worship—and was ready, at all times, to converse on religious subjects. He was now fulfilling the expectations that were early entertained of his usefulness.

The change in brother Fickle appeared to be so thorough, and his deportment was really so consistent, and he had so learned from sad experience, the folly of departing from Christ, that we hoped he would not again backslide. But we were disappointed. His zeal declined with the fervor of the revival. To all

the neglects and follies of his former declension, it was now strongly suspected that he added the sin of drunkenness. The proof of his guilt was not certain. He was fond of strong drink—visited dram-shops more frequently than either inclination or business would be likely to lead a temperate man to do—and the inflamed appearance of his face was a sign against him. Much to his credit, it must be said, that when Deacon *Faithful* heard the rumor of his drunkenness, visited him, and expostulated with him on the danger of his habits, he promptly signed the Total Abstinence pledge; and for a time, at least, observed it with fidelity.

Brother *Fickle* came to me one day, at the commencement of the year, with tears in his eyes, saying, "I have determined to do better this year than I have ever done before. I will attend the meetings of the church, and perform my religious duties, whatever else I may neglect." I was pleased with his spontaneous resolutions, and deemed them both timely and important. For several weeks, I saw his face at every meeting; then I missed it occasionally, and soon altogether, except on extraordinary occasions. If we had a strange preacher, or a baptism, or any unusual interest or excitement in the meetings, no member was more likely to be present than he; and a visitor judging from such occasions, would conclude that he was the most active and valuable member of the church.

Brother *Fickle* is never long pleased with the same preacher. One morning I chanced to meet him. He

was not *then* a member of our church; and, I may remark, in passing, that he has several times, without necessity, changed his church connection. A bright smile was on his countenance as he inquired of me—"Have you heard our new preacher? He is the greatest orator I have ever heard. Last Sunday night his sermon was splendid. Oh, how beautifully he says, *the rainbow round about the throne!*" Not long afterwards I learned that a portion of the church were disaffected with their excellent pastor. I was not surprised, on inquiry, to find that brother *Fickle* and his numerous family, were among the discontented. Fortunately he had not influence greatly to diminish the pastor's usefulness. The good man labored on with encouraging success; but brother *Fickle*, unable to enjoy his privileges, was seen sometimes in one congregation and sometimes in another; and not unfrequently found, or supposed he found, more edification and comfort in reading the Scriptures at home, or riding into the country, to behold the beautiful works of God, than in attending on the public ministrations of his word.

When the impulse strikes him, brother Fickle is very liberal. He once gave fifty dollars to a Mission agent, for whose preaching he conceived a great attachment, and promised twenty dollars a year to the same object; but to the regular church collections he generally declines to give any thing, or gives very sparingly. I remember that I once called on him to contribute to an object which strongly appealed to

Christian liberality, but he excused himself on the ground of poverty: in a few days I learned that he had just paid a considerable sum for an article of mere curiosity. It is clear that he is governed by no settled principle in the use of money; for sometimes he bestows it lavishly on objects trivial in themselves, and having no claims to his aid, and, at other times, he withholds, even a pittance, from objects intrinsically important, and making strong appeals to his benevolence. Nay, a cause which at one time he cherishes and patronizes, at another time, without any reason, he not only repudiates, but opposes.

Brother *Fickle's* doctrinal views have been as variable as his religious feelings. He has been a Calvinist, so uncompromising in his opinions, that he could not hear a preacher, with any patience, who did not in every sermon furnish evidence of his orthodoxy on the Five Points. He has been an Arminian of the lowest grade, differing but little in his sentiments from a self-righteous formalist. His mind was once unsettled on the subject of communion. At that time it ran wholly on the evils of bigotry; and so deeply was it impressed with those evils, that I heard him say, that he *could not fellowship* any man who did not agree with him on this subject. Now, however, his mind is so occupied with the sublimest of all enterprises, as he deems it, the emendation of the common version of the Scriptures in the English language, that he has quite forgotten his scruples about close communion. He has been on the verge of becoming

a Reformer, or more intelligibly a Campbellite; and nothing preserved him from the change but hearing from some of them remarks in derogation of Christian experience. I should, in truth, not be greatly surprised, if he were to turn a Mormon. His temperament would make him, for a season at least, a most impetuous and fiery member of that singular sect. The character of brother *Fickle,* however singular and censurable, can offer no claim to originality. It was vividly drawn by an inspired limner nearly eighteen centuries ago—"Tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."*

The piety of this *Inconstant Christian* resembles, not a living and perennial fountain, clear and refreshing; but a wet weather spring, bold and flowing, but muddy and uncertain.

"Do you think," inquired an observant and candid man of the world, "that *Mr. Fickle* is a *real Christian?*" I confess I am incompetent to answer the question. In my early years I had great confidence in my ability to judge of men's piety; but I have been so frequently deceived both in my favorable and unfavorable opinions of men, that I am now very distrustful of my judgment. I cannot discern brother *Fickle's* motives—I know not what degree of imperfection is incompatible with sincere piety—nor can I

* Eph. iv: 14.

judge of the allowance which should be made for his impulsive temperament. I must say, he is *now* a member of our church—has been several times under discipline, sometimes for neglects and sometimes for positive offences; but he has always been acquitted in consequence of his plausible explanations, or excused on the ground of his confessions, and promised amendments. He has been of some advantage, and of serious disadvantage, to the church. A church composed wholly of such members would be a religious phenomenon, and their history would be more interesting than any work of fiction. I have, at present, no hope that *Fickle* will soon be expelled from the church. His relatives and friends have a decided preponderance in the management of its affairs; and it is supposed, though I have not myself made the estimate, that four-fifths of the church are related, or friendly to him. It should be to us, my brethren, a great comfort that God is judge. He knows what is in men, and will reward them according to their deeds.

Inconstant Christians I would exhort, in the language of the apostle—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."* Paul not only gave the precept, but furnished in his life an admirable instance of Christian firmness. Addressing the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he said—"And

* 1 Cor. xv: 5-8.

now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." Ah, my brethren, imposing processions, magnificent cathedrals, crowded and delighted auditories, and costly donations did not await this devoted servant of Christ, as he journeyed from city to city, in his mission of love, but "bonds and afflictions"—the fury of mobs, cruel scourgings, imprisonments, the desertion of friends, and a bloody martyrdom; and these evils were distinctly revealed to the noble sufferer by the infallible Spirit of God. A mind less firm and resolute than his would have been appalled, discouraged and turned aside by such terrors; but they served merely to stimulate the zeal, confirm the purpose, and ennoble the character of this Christian hero. "But none of these things move me," said he, "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."* My brethren, obey the apostolic exhortation —imitate the apostolic example, if you would be useful, respectable, or secure your own salvation.

I close with a few remarks to my dear brethren concerning *Inconstant Christians*. We have them among us. Let us guard against the paralyzing influence of their example. Let us learn from their infir-

* Acts xx: 22, 24.

mity, and the inconsistencies into which it hurries them, to prize more highly, and cultivate more assiduously Christian firmness, carefully guarding against the extreme to which it tends—*obstinacy*. Let us watch over these imperfect brethren more carefully, deal with them more faithfully, pray for them more fervently, and set before them examples more worthy of their imitation. "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."*

* Heb. xiii: 20-21

LECTURE IX.

FASHIONABLE CHRISTIANS.

Fashion is not in itself an evil. Every person must follow some fashion in dress, equipage, and manners. It may be plain or gaudly, cheap or costly, chaste or immodest, in good or bad taste; but of necessity he adopts some fashion or form. The ascetic, who bitterly declaims against fashion as a crying evil, has a fashion of his own, formed according to his own taste and judgment; and to this fashion he may cleave with more unyielding tenacity than does the veriest devotee to the latest patterns from the emporium of taste. Fashion is a universal sovereign; and all do her more or less reverence. I once knew a Christian minister —a good man, of narrow views, and of an ascetic turn of mind—the burden of whose ministry was the baneful effects of fashion. He sternly resolved to free himself from all guilt and suspicion of worshipping the goddess, in order to enforce his declamation against the deadly evil. In contempt of her authority, he refused to wear buttons on his coat; and yet, in submission to it, he wore a tail to his coat—an equally useless appendage. His conscience forbade his wearing a cravat in summer; and yet he had no scruples

about wearing a high-crowned hat—one of the most arbitrary products of taste. In short, warring against Fashion from no well-defined principle, he fell into glaring inconsistencies, and received or rejected her mandates as caprice might dictate. Let fashions be modest, simple, in good taste, and in conformity with our means and station, and we need not fear to follow them. Some fashions are extravagant, immodest, or in corrupt taste. These Christians should carefully avoid. Gaudy, superfluous, and unchaste attire do not become the followers of Christ. Their apparel, neat, modest, and seemly, should symbolize the meekness and quietness which dwell within. But even good and becoming fashions may be followed with an interest and devotion incompatible with serious and consistent piety. She that thinks more of adorning the outward than the inward nature, more of dress than of godliness, more of fashion than of duty, "is dead while she liveth." To conform to existing fashions, so far as convenience, respectability, and usefulness may demand, is the part of wisdom: to follow them at the sacrifice of health, interest, and duty, is the part of folly. Some professing Christians —I will not say many, though I probably might, without indulging a censorious spirit—are devotees of Fashion. Their dress, furniture, equipage, entertainments, and such things, engross their affections, thoughts, and conversation, and exhaust their pecuniary resources. They are far more concerned, judging from their spirit and conduct, that their garments

should be of the most approved fashion, and that their pleasure parties should be conducted according to the most refined etiquette, than that their children should be converted to Christ, or their own souls should grow in grace. The memoir of *Sister Worldly*, which I now propose to sketch, may stand, with some additions and subtractions, as a truthful picture of every individual in this category.

Sister Worldly was born in affluence, and brought up in ease and indulgence. Her mother, Mrs. *Gay*, was a church member of very volatile spirit, seemingly of sincere piety, but greatly wanting in Scriptural knowledge, and a sound judgment. Her only daughter was idolized and petted; and great pains were taken to instruct her in the ornamental, and very little in the solid branches of education; and her moral training was almost entirely neglected. Soon after Miss *Gay* quitted the Seminary, a very extensive and powerful revival occurred in her father's neighborhood. Most of her young companions were converted, and became joyful members of the church. Miss *Gay*, after a severe and protracted conflict, professed, among the last fruits of the revival, to find peace in believing. It was a long while before she could gain her consent to be baptized. She had been brought up among Baptists, was convinced of the truth of their peculiar views, and frankly admitted her obligation to unite with the church; but this denomination in the place where she dwelt was mostly composed of the poor and unrefined, and her associates, owing to her

wealth and accomplishments, were in another circle. Long she hesitated between following her convictions into the Baptist church, or her inclination into a church of another denomination, where she found more taste, fashion, and display. Through the influence of the faithful pastor of the Baptist church, the struggle was finally closed by her public baptism, and admission into church fellowship. Miss *Gay* might have been eminently useful. Her wealth, sprightliness, and personal charms made her the attractive centre of a wide circle; and had she only been imbued with a becoming zeal for truth and holiness, many might have been blessed by her influence; but she did not promise much usefulness. She took no part in Sunday-school instruction — rarely attended the prayer meetings—and was frequently absent from the Lord's-day worship.

It was not long before Mr. *Worldly* became a suitor for the hand and heart of Miss *Gay*. He was wealthy, respectable, and genteel, but irreligious, fond of pleasure, and rather inclined to dissipation. Miss *Gay's* pious and judicious friends earnestly dissuaded her from encouraging his attentions: but Mrs. *Gay* approved the match, and the daughter followed, on this occasion, her mother's advice. The effects of this unwise union soon began to appear. Mrs. *Worldly* was rarely seen at church—when there, she invariably arrived late—and evidently felt very little interest in the services. She paid the closest and most constant attention to her style of living. Her raiment was of

the most costly material, the most tasteful patterns, and made according to the newest and most approved fashions. Her spacious house was filled with furniture of the latest and most expensive style. On her centre table were the last novel, the splendidly embellished monthly, and quite a load of annuals, and works of light literature; but there were lacking Pilgrim's Progress, the Call to the Unconverted, and the Family Bible. Soon *Sister Worldly* began to attend parties, balls, theatrical exhibitions, and such amusements; not that she took delight in these things, as she stated to her pastor, but merely to please her husband—though rumor whispered that in other things she was not remarkable for submission to his will.

She aspired to be the most fashionable lady in her neighborhood, and the pre-eminence was generally accorded to her.

Sometimes *Sister Worldly* experienced quite an impulse of religious zeal. Ordinarily when Associations or Conventions were held in the place where she lived, she could furnish no accommodation for Christ's ministers—her house was filled with particular friends, or she was short of servants, or Mr. *Worldly* did not like to entertain company; but when Dr. *Noble* visited the place, and many were prepared to accommodate him, she insisted on taking him to her house, entertained him with queenly hospitality, carried him to church in her carriage, and almost engrossed his society. The Doctor left her house with the impression that she was a Christian of rare zeal and efficiency.

We are naturally led to inquire after the religious influence of *Sister Worldly* in her family. Her husband became an infidel and inebriate, and a shame and grief to his family. Her sons, noble-looking men, imbibed their father's principles, followed his example, and were never seen in the house of God. Her daughters sometimes attended church; but they were the most frivolous, disorderly, and hardened of all the young persons in the congregation; and their pastor despaired of their conversion to Christ. On one occasion *Sister Worldly* designed giving a very large party. There was a serious difficulty in her way—her oldest son, fast becoming a sot, she knew would get intoxicated, and probably disgrace himself and the family at the entertainment. A discreet friend of her's suggested the propriety of her having a strictly temperance party—a measure to which her husband, recently alarmed by symptoms of apoplexy, would readily have consented. But said *Sister Worldly*—"What would people think of me if I should have a party without wine? They would say, I am covetous and mean. No, no! I can't consent to have my family disgraced by a party without wines—the very best that can be procured." The party was given—the spacious mansion of the *Worldly* family was crowded with merry guests—the tables groaned with every luxury, and the most tempting wines—the festivity was rapturous and long continued; but young *Worldly* was soon inebriated, made himself ridiculous, marred the pleasures of the entertainment, was re-

moved by force from the company, seized with *delirium tremens*, and for several days his life was in great danger.

Many envied Mrs. *Worldly*, thinking that amid so much wealth and splendor, and in such an incessant round of visitings, parties, and amusements, she must be happy. Had they known, as I knew, how little respect she commanded in her family, how she was grieved and mortified by the dissipations of her husband and sons, how she was tried by the waywardness of her daughters, and how heartless and insipid were all her fashionable amusements, they would have pitied her heartily. She was an unhappy woman. She had not piety enough to sustain and comfort her; and she knew from experience that a fashionable life was one of "vanity and vexation of spirit."

There were some redeeming traits in the character of *Sister Worldly*. She was kind to the poor, had a sympathizing heart, and to her friends she was extremely generous. At times she felt and deplored her lack of piety, resolved to reform her life, and made ineffectual efforts to change its current. Her contributions to the cause of piety were uniformly meagre and grudgingly made; but for other objects she could sometimes give with surprising liberality. When the church ventured on the questionable method of obtaining money by a fair, she exerted herself to forward the scheme, excelling all the sisters in the costliness and beauty of the articles which she offered for sale, and the amount received at her counter.

Several years have passed since *Sister Worldly* closed her career of fashion and pleasure in the grave. The circumstances of her departure were melancholy, but I must not omit them. Mr. *Worldly* had just completed a large, beautiful, and most convenient residence. No expense was spared to make it the first building in the city. It was almost a terrestrial paradise. The garden was extensive, tastefully laid out, and supplied, at great cost, with rare shrubbery and delicious fruits. The rooms of the noble mansion were adorned with a profusion of furniture, of the newest style, and most expensive quality. *Sister Worldly's* heart was much set on her new home. She looked forward to her entrance into it as the commencement of a new life. But, alas! how sadly are human hopes sometimes blighted. Her health was delicate and declining when she entered her loved palace. The disease under which she labored was insidious in its nature and slow in its progress. Her physician, in whose judgment she placed great reliance, flattered her with the hope of her speedy restoration to health; and she excluded from her sick room the few faithful friends who would have disclosed to her the peril of her situation. Her family were hardly aware of her real condition, and unwilling to disclose to her their fears. The neighbors all knew that Mrs. *Worldly* must soon die, while as yet the family had little alarm, and she was cheerful, and fondly talking of health, parties, and visitings. The disease, meanwhile, was making steady and fatal progress. Two or three days before

her death, the conviction that her end was nigh flashed on her mind. Neither the flatteries of her physician, nor her own vain hopes, could longer deceive her. She was perfectly overwhelmed at an event which she so little expected, and for which she was so little prepared. To give up her new house and its furniture, and to take up her dwelling in the dark and solitary grave, was to her a dreary and appalling prospect. She could not live, nor could she consent to die. She was not without hope for the future, but consternation, and not hope, was the prevailing feeling of her mind. She died without light, without peace, with feeble hope, and was carried forth from her splendid mansion to the narrow and cheerless house appointed for all the living: and her end furnishes an impressive commentary on the vanity, folly, and wretchedness of a fashionable life. I dare not say that her soul was lost—I would trust that, through infinite riches of grace, it was saved: but who would willingly die such a death? and how many fashionable Christians are preparing themselves for just such an end?

We close, my hearers, with a few practical remarks on this subject.

1. Let us adopt Scriptural views on the theme under consideration. On this, as on other subjects, men are prone to extremes—some to the ascetic, and some to the licentious extreme. I have already intimated that the evil lies, not in conforming to existing fashions as such; but in following immodest or ex-

travagant fashions, or becoming fashions with an undue devotion. The apostle enjoins on Christ's disciples non-conformity to this world: but the prohibition must be understood with proper limitation. The apostle did not design to teach that if the world wear raiment of a certain texture, color, and pattern, that Christians for that reason should avoid its use; but merely that they should abstain from concord with the world in whatever is sinful. The passage itself does not define the line of separation between the church and the world, but leaves the disciples to discover that line in the light of other portions of the Scriptures. Another apostle enjoins on wives that their adorning should not be outward,—plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. But Peter did not inhibit all attention to personal neatness and ornament—all use of gold and apparel in adorning the body—but required that the chief attention should be bestowed on the adornment of the heart. The outward man may be adorned with neatness, good taste, and elegance; but the cultivation and improvement of the heart is the chief business of life. The devotee of fashion neglects the adornment of the heart; and the ascetic declaimer against fashion attaches, as do the objects of his censure, an undue importance to the vestments of the outward man.

2. We should consider how little is to be gained by devotion to Fashion. She is as very a despot as ever

occupied a Turkish throne. Her mandates are frequently capricious, senseless, in violation of good taste, extravagant, burdensome, cruel, and even murderous. Her slaves are not unfrequently severely taxed, exhausted by fatigue, exposed to heat and cold, and subjected to the most heartless drudgery. And what, permit me to inquire, is gained by this painful vassalage? Respectability is the phantom sought by these voluntary slaves. They hope, by attention to fashion, to be admired for their taste, praised for their accomplishments, and elevated to the highest circle of society. But I put it to the candid judgment of my hearers, whether a lady is exalted one inch in the estimation of the discerning and the virtuous, because she is fashionable? Nay, does not the unsophisticated heart instinctively recoil from rendering homage to the woman of gaiety, fashion, and pleasure? Does not the woman concerned mainly for the cultivation of the intellect and heart, of neat and plain attire, and of unaffected and dignified manners, carry away the palm from her, even in the estimation of those whose smile she courts? A *fashionable Christian!* What pastor desires to have such a member in his church? Who would seek her prayers in a time of distress? Who would be willing to occupy her place in a dying hour? "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

My dear friends, let us resolve that we will more diligently follow the fashions set for us by our divine Master. He has given us no pattern for the form of

our garments, but a most beautiful pattern for the guidance of our lives—a pattern in which all the amiable and lovely are blended with all the noble and commanding traits of human character; and has, with the kindness of a father, and the authority of a sovereign, said to us—"Follow me."

LECTURE X.

FRIVOLOUS CHRISTIANS.

FRIVOLITY is opposed to *gravity—sobriety.* Christians should be grave. It is according to "sound doctrine that the aged men be sober," and "grave," as well as "temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience."* But the obligation to be grave and sober is not peculiar to old men. "Young men," writes Paul to Titus, "likewise, exhort to be sober-minded." This evangelist was enjoined, not merely to exhort young men to sober-mindedness, but to exemplify in his own conduct the excellence of the precept. "In all things," continued the apostle, "showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing," among other important qualities, "gravity."† No disposition, certainly, can be more becoming men redeemed from sin and death than gravity. When they consider from what guilt and danger they have been rescued—by how great a sacrifice their deliverance was effected—how weighty and solemn are their responsibilities to Christ—how numerous, artful and malignant are their enemies—how sin and misery overspread

* Tit. ii: 3. † Tit. ii: 6–7

the world—and how brief and uncertain is the period of their earthly sojourn—can they be otherwise than *grave?*

But Christians are required to be grave, not *morose.* Moroseness is selfish, bitter, sullen, implacable—gravity is considerate, gentle, kind, heavenly. Jesus was grave, not morose—serious, not severe; and his disciples are bound to imbibe his spirit.

Christians should be grave, not *gloomy.* Gravity is compatible with cheerfulness, joy and sociability—gloominess unfits the mind alike for intercourse with men, and with God—for the pleasures of society, and the duties of religion. Jesus was grave, not gloomy—the warmth of his heart, the brightness of his countenance, and the kindness of his words, made him a welcome guest in every social circle where sin was not tolerated. Whether we contemplate him at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, in the pious family of Martha in Bethany, or in his frequent interviews with his chosen disciples, we cannot but be impressed with the cheerfulness, sociality, and gentleness of his manners. He came "eating and drinking" like other men. He was in the truest, noblest sense, "a friend of publicans and sinners."* And his disciples are under the strongest obligation to imitate the lovely, winning example of their Master.

Frivolity makes a mind light, inconsiderate, and unimpressed with divine things. It is generally, but

* Mat. xi: 19.

not exclusively the sin of youth. It is sometimes, though most unbecomingly, associated with gray hairs and infirmities. What measure of levity is compatible with sincere piety, it is difficult to say; but, certainly, its habitual, and unrestrained indulgence is not. Piety is a serious thing. It has its hopes, its consolations, and its joys; but it has also its mortifications, its sorrows, and its conflicts. Though not recorded in so many words, it is the plain teaching of revelation, that no trifler shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."* It must be taken by storm; or, to speak without a figure, the blessings of true religion are enjoyed only by those who earnestly desire, and vigorously seek them.

Frivolous Christians are, I am sorry to say, a very *numerous class.* Frivolity is an evil confined to no age, nor sex, nor rank. It is found in every Christian church. The most considerate and dignified disciples of Jesus are liable to be surprised, or allured, into its indulgence. It invades the pulpit; and diffuses thence a most mischievous influence.

I propose to depict some of the *Evils of Frivolity* as they are seen in the life of *Elder Lightman.*

He was naturally of a warm, excitable, and lively temperament. His disposition was kind but volatile. If I may be allowed to speak phrenologically, his

* Mat. xi: 12.

organ of self-esteem was largely developed. Eminently social in his spirit, he was fond of conversation, or rather of talking, and usually made himself—his attainments, exploits or purposes—the theme of his remarks. He was singularly impulsive, rarely taking time to weigh his words, or consider the consequences of his acts.

The religious experience of Mr. *Lightman* was somewhat remarkable. His feelings were deep, but variable. His tears were often succeeded by levity; and his levity as often by tears still more bitter. One fact in his experience will best illustrate his character. While he was apparently under deep conviction of sin, he attended a meeting in which there was a solemn and pervasive religious influence. At this meeting, something ludicrous, or which appeared to him to be so, occurred. Instantly all his serious thoughts and impressions were gone, and he was seized with an uncontrollable fit of laughter. To prevent the exposure of his levity he withdrew from the congregation, and gave full indulgence to his mirth. Soon, however, the tide of his feelings changed. His laughter was followed by a sense of guilt, alarm, tears, and lamentations; but in the midst of these painful exercises, the ludicrous scene presented itself again vividly to his mind, upset his gravity, and threw him into convulsive laughter. The poor man returned from a religious meeting, which he had attended, earnestly desiring to be benefitted, with distressing fears that he had committed the unpardonable sin.

Strong confidence in Christ, a bright hope of heaven, and an overflowing joy, signalized the conversion of *Lightman*. He was promptly baptized, and united with a church of Christ. Possessing a brilliant intellect, a good education, and a ready and graceful elocution, he was easily persuaded to enter the Christian ministry. High hopes were entertained of his usefulness. His manners were popular, his preaching was attractive, and his zeal and energy were marked. Soon, however, his levity began to exert a baleful influence.

This infirmity showed itself in an excessive attention to his personal appearance. He was handsome, vain of his beauty, and sought to exhibit it to advantage. A neat attire, suited to age and position, becomes a Christian minister; but a fondness for dress is utterly unworthy of him. The pulpit occupied by Elder *Lightman* stood in a position unfavorable to the display of his personal charms. He therefore proposed and succeeded in effecting such changes in it, the light that shone on it, and the drapery surrounding it, as were best adapted to the exhibition of his noble form, fair complexion, and tasteful dress. There stands the pulpit, an enduring monument of the pastor's frivolity and self-complacency, Alas! that a minister of Christ, called to watch for souls as one that must give account, should be more concerned to display his own beauty than the glory of Christ—should convert the pulpit, Heaven's appointed means of human salvation, into a stage, on which to exhibit, with scenic effect, his personal charms!

The conversation of Elder *Lightman* was eminently frivolous. In every society, under the most solemn circumstances, in week days and on Lord's days, his levity was apparent. No opportunity of jesting was permitted to pass unused, and he would sooner lose a friend than spoil a pun. No subject was too important or grave to be converted by him into a theme for merriment. Had he been as anxious to instruct and profit as he was to amuse his associates, he would have been a most valuable companion. Those who observed his usual solemnity and fervency in the pulpit, and his thoughtless levity out of it, frequently remarked of him—what has often been remarked of others—"When he is in the pulpit, he preaches so well that he should never come out of it; and when he is out of it, his conversation is so frivolous that he should never go into it."

A fact may best show the evil influence of his levity. He attended a meeting where many ministers, from various parts of the country, were present, among whom were some distinguished for their learning, eloquence, and piety. He was the star of the occasion. In the pulpit, the solemnity of his countenance, the fervor of his manner, and his graceful elocution, added to the intrinsic excellence of his discourses, made him the centre of interest and attraction. The venerableness of age, the sayings of wisdom, and the dawning of genius, were all forgotten in the admiration excited by the glowing eloquence, and impassioned appeals of Elder *Lightman*, then in his early prime.

When the meeting closed his praises were on almost every lip. It happened that sister *Grave*, a lady eminent for piety, discretion, and dignity, shared the hospitality of the family in which he was quartered. I said to her, after the meeting had ended, "How did you like brother *Lightman's* preaching?" "I wish never to hear him again," was her prompt and pointed reply." "Why?" I enquired, with surprise. "His conversation is so light and trifling that I can have no confidence in his piety." I was sorry to hear the remark. The judgment of the excellent sister was severe. She did not make due allowance for the natural temperament of the man, the exhilarating circumstances in which he was placed, and the strong temptations which he was under to please and amuse, by his wit and vivacity, those whom he had astonished and dazzled by his sermons. But still, knowing, as I did, the sound judgment, the high sense of propriety, the unaffected piety, and the wide and deserved influence of sister *Grave*, I would not have been willing that she should entertain such an opinion of me for all the popularity which Elder *Lightman* won from the vast and delighted crowd on that occasion.

It would not have been so bad if his levity had been confined to his social intercourse. Unfortunately, the frivolity of his temper and his fondness for the ludicrous, sometimes broke through the restraints imposed by the sacredness of the pulpit. He often sought to gain a smile when he should have aimed to win a soul. Usually, indeed, he was solemn, even tender and pa-

thetic, in the sacred desk; but occasionally the causticity, oddity, or ludicrousness of his remarks would move his congregation to an involuntary smile, or ill-suppressed laughter. On one occasion the effect of his untimely mirth was most painful and disreputable. For the elucidation of some point, he related an amusing story. Its effect was irresistible. Throughout the dense congregation there was a half-concealed titter. This pervasive mirth re-acted on the preacher, and he burst into loud and unrestrained laughter. The assembly, freed from all restraints by the unseemly example of the preacher, indulged in merriment, the more hearty and vociferous, from their previous efforts to suppress it. After the general outburst of amusement, order and gravity were restored. The preacher apologized for his levity, resumed the thread of his discourse, and was proceeding with his usual pathos, when the unfortunate story which had caused the diversion came again vividly into his mind. He suddenly stopped, struggled a moment with the threatening eruption, and broke forth again into laughter. The congregation, catching the sympathy, laughed in unison with him. All attempts to re-commence the religious services were vain. The feelings of the preacher and of the people were utterly inharmonious with the place, the occasion, and the appropriate services. The meeting closed in a farce. It was, indeed, in one, but not in every aspect a farce. It was a melancholy scene. Angels might have wept over it. The Lord's day was desecrated, the house of worship was dishon-

ored, the pulpit was prostituted, the people were taught to make a mock at sacred things, the preacher of the gospel was disgraced, God was offended, and infidelity was invited to sneer and triumph. I do not envy *Lightman* the feelings with which he returned to his home to reflect on his levity, folly, and merited reproach. In other places he retained his reputation and influence; but he could never again appear at the scene of his impious levity without a feeling of shame, and exciting a vivid recollection of his folly.

I need not farther pursue the life of Elder *Lightman*. He is, I trust, a good man. He possesses some noble qualities. But for his besetting sin, he might be one of the most successful of Christian ministers. As it is, his usefulness is equivocal. Some good he seems to do in winning souls to Christ, and in edifying the saints; but such large subtractions must be made for the reproach which he brings on religion, and the pain which he inflicts on its intelligent friends, that it is not easy to say on which side the balance is found. Many admire and love him, and grieve that one so eminently fitted for usefulness should, by his frivolity, so sadly mar it.

I will conclude this Lecture with a few remarks to that class of Christians so strikingly represented by Elder *Lightman*.

Frivolity is an evil *not easily corrected*. The line of demarcation between Christian cheerfulness and sinful levity is not in all cases easily drawn. There may be—there often is—a gradual and unconscious

gliding from right to wrong. This evil, too, may have its origin in the best impulses of our nature—a social disposition, and a desire to please; and no habit grows more imperceptibly and more vigorously than that of frivolity. Other sins are checked; this is encouraged by society. Other sins may bring us into reproach; this, though it may be a spot on our religious character, and blight our religious influence, will make us acceptable and valued companions in many circles of society, from which consistent piety is excluded, or in which it is barely tolerated. Conscience, so potent in the correction of other evils, has but little power in curing this. It may be so plausibly justified, or, at least, excused and palliated, that her remonstrances are silenced, or reduced to faint and unheeded whispers. And yet frivolity is an evil, and a serious one, for the correction of which those Christians who have indulged in it should make constant and earnest efforts. That I may aid you, my brethren, in curing this disease, suffer a few words of exhortation.

1. Consider its *mischievous* effects. If you possess any piety, you desire to be useful, and the fervency of this desire agrees with the depth of your piety. If your levity should not utterly prevent, it will certainly diminish your Christian influence and usefulness. Your companions may give you full credit for your kindness, sociability, and pleasantry; but if they do not despise, they will lightly esteem your religious character. They will think less of religion by the exemplification

of it furnished in your spirit and manners. If they desire religious instruction, they will not seek it at your lips; if, in times of distress and danger, they wish prayer to be offered to God on their behalf, they will not apply to you as intercessors. Your example may prove a terrible curse to those whom you most tenderly love. Your companions—your children—may be led by your levity and folly to despise the gospel, and the Redeemer whom it reveals, and to lose their souls.

2. Think, dear brethren, *how incongruous is your frivolity with your solemn responsibilities.* Whether we consider the price at which you have been redeemed—the precious blood of Christ; the end for which you are kept in the world—to glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his; or the enemies with which you have to maintain a ceaseless conflict; it is most seemly that you should "pass the time of your sojourning here," not in levity, but "in fear."* You are called to watchfulness, the mortification of your lusts, a life of earnest piety; in fine, to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Need I tell you how incompatible these duties are with a light and trifling spirit? Let the warrior sport in the battle-field, covered with carnage and blood—let the mariner sport in the threatening tempest—let the surgeon sport in the hospital, amid the sick and dying; but you, my brethren, should be "serious in a serious cause." You have to do with solemn matters.

* 1 Pet. i; 17.

Sin, death, and hell are serious things. You may be frivolous, but angels, Christ, and God are serious. You will not always laugh. Death is a solemn event. It is no light thing for a trifler to die. If the eminent Grotius, when he was about to die, declared, because he had devoted himself to secular learning rather than the study of the Bible, that he had spent his life in laborious trifling, in what terms of self-reproach and bitter lamentation, will you express the folly and guilt of lives wasted in thoughtless frivolity?

In conclusion, permit me, brethren, to urge you, if your consciences accuse you of this sin, to make instant, determined, earnest efforts, depending on divine aid, to overcome it. The disease is hard to cure, but not incurable. It may be that, to exorcise the demon, prayer, fasting, watchfulness, and long-continued struggling may be necessary. But duty, usefulness, enjoyment, safety, and the glory of Christ demand the effort and the sacrifices. A peaceful death, a memory blessed, and a glorious reward in heaven, beckon you to fight till you have gained the victory.

LECTURE XI.

SENSITIVE CHRISTIANS.

By *Sensitive Christians* I do not mean such as are remarkable for the liveliness of their religious feelings. This is a choice class of Christians. I once had the pleasure of numbering brother *Lively* among my constant hearers. He always took his seat near the pulpit, and listened to the Word preached with intense interest, and a heart responsive to all its claims. His absorbed attention, the variations in his countenance, and his flowing tears, evinced the warmth of his feelings. Nor did his emotions die away with the sound of the preacher's voice, but subsequently showed themselves in the spirituality of his conversation, the fervor of his devotions, and the activity of his efforts in the cause of Christ. If on the face of the earth there was a church composed of such members as brother *Lively*, I should delight to be their pastor. Widely different, however, are such Christians from the class of which I am going to speak. I will make no apology for delineating, this evening, the character of brother *Touchy*, with whom, if you have no personal acquaintance, you may deem yourselves fortunate. He is rather a distinguished member of the class of *Sensitive Christians.*

This disciple has some excellent qualities. He is *scrupulous*, almost to a fault. On all questions of duty, he is, from temperament, an ultraist. Some years ago the propriety of making abstinence from the use of intoxicating drinks a condition of church membership, was discussed in the church to which he belonged. Of course, he was in favor of the new test of fellowship. In debating the question, a brother said to him, "The principles which you advocate would lead to the exclusion of church-members for using coffee, tea, or tobacco." "Yes," replied brother *Touchy*, "and I am in favor of carrying out the principle." And so, no doubt, he was, sincerely and honestly. I should never expect this brother to do a mean thing. He may act rashly or foolishly; but he has no trickery or unfairness. He would be a valuable member of the church were it not for his characteristic infirmity. This renders him good for nothing. Brother *Touchy's* great fault is his susceptibility of being wounded—his readiness to take offence. The most harmless action or word, or even look, may fill him with grief, or kindle his resentment. A thousand may be addressed, but he is sure your remarks are intended for him. You may speak of a class, or of an abstract quality, but he considers your words offensively personal. You may explain your meaning, but your explanation is almost certain to be, in his estimation, worse than the original offence. You may keep silent, but he interprets your silence as a want of respect to himself. You

may compliment him, and, although he is fond of compliments, two to one but he will suspect you of a design to flatter him, and be sincerely grieved. You may speak to him in jest, but, understanding you seriously, he is sorely hurt; or you may speak to him seriously, and suspecting you of jesting, he will be equally wounded. With almost every member of the church, at one time or another, he has been displeased. He was greatly distressed and offended because sister *Good* said that his son John, a petted, spoiled, and rude boy, behaved badly in church—a fact known to all the congregation. On one occasion Deacon *Faithful* made some remarks about church-members who were delinquent in the payment of their church subscriptions—remarks kind, pertinent, and weighty, as his remarks always were. It happened that brother *Touchy* belonged at the time, though it was an unusual thing, to this class; and he was dreadfully hurt by the Deacon's remarks; and long and affectionately did the Deacon labor before he could heal the wound. Brother *Touchy* was peculiarly liable to be grieved with his pastor. He had been under the charge of several pastors, before I took the oversight of the church. They were excellent men, of very different characters and gifts, but all eminently useful. Brother *Touchy* was grieved and offended with them all. I was apprized of his character, and resolved, if possible, to avoid hurting his feelings; but it was not possible. In a short time, I took occasion to warn my hearers against the danger of attending dram shops.

It unfortunately happened that this brother had recently visited one on business, and supposing that I designed to reprove him for his conduct, he was greatly distressed. When I heard of this trouble, I went to him, and by assuring him that I had not heard of his visit to the dram shop, and did not even see him in the congregation at the time of the offensive remarks, I succeeded in quieting his mind. But it did not avail much; for in a little while he was again offended at some equally harmless remark, and during the whole period of my ministry in the church has been receiving wounds which I have no little trouble in healing. Fortunately for brother *Touchy* these wounds leave no scars, else he would be one of the most frightful of living beings.

It must in fairness be said that brother *Touchy* is not malicious. He is "soon angry," but his anger soon abates. His infirmity is far more injurious to himself than to any one else. Now that his character is well known, nobody is surprised to hear that he is offended, and, in truth, nobody has any great concern about it. All have come to view it as one of those inevitable occurrences which must be borne with patience and resignation.

I have carefully inquired for the cause of brother *Touchy's* sensitiveness. Whether the man was a spoiled child, I do not know; but he acts much as if it were so. Perhaps he is of an unfortunate nervous temperament, which renders him peevish and tender. On one point I am perfectly certain—pride has much

to do with his sensibility. He sometimes makes me his confident, and pours his grievances into my ears. I never fail to notice in the account which he gives of his supposed insults and injuries, that he represents that due respect has not been paid to his age, office, or character. On one occasion he was invited to dine with an amiable brother: a large company was present. He was not invited to take a seat at the first table, and he became violently offended, and left the house. As soon as the mistake was discovered, the good brother went in pursuit of the offended guest, and assured him that he had been simply overlooked, and apologized in the most courteous manner for the seeming neglect; but brother *Touchy*, more than usually resentful, refused, in a most unchristian spirit, to receive the apology. His dignity had been offended, and could not be easily appeased. Brother *Touchy* was visionary as well as sensitive. He formed a favorable opinion of his own abilities, and his mind was usually pregnant with wild and impracticable schemes. By some means it came to his knowledge that Elder *Weigh-well* had a poor opinion of his judgment. From that day forward the Elder was considered by him as a personal enemy, though nothing was farther from the truth. He was greatly pained that one whose favorable opinion he would have prized, should think so unjustly of him; and his grief found vent in language of self-adulation and bold defiance. But enough of brother *Touchy's* faults.

I have some important advice to offer to that some-

what numerous and respectable, but very unfortunate, class of Christians to which Mr. *Touchy* belongs :—

1. *Be sure you take no offence when none is intended.* In such a world as this, offences must of necessity come. So diversified are the tempers, views, interests, and pursuits of men, that conflicts and injuries must occur; and the real offences in this life are sufficiently numerous without adding to the list imaginary ones. Be careful, then, brethren, not to misconstrue innocent words and actions into serious insults. You know, or ought to know, your infirmity, and should guard against it. If any person offends you without designing to do it, the blame is yours, and not his; and every such instance of groundless irritation is a reproach both on your judgment and your temper; and should these instances increase, they will furnish decisive proof of your indiscretion; and, at length, in every contest it will be taken for granted that you are wrong and your opponents right. When brother *Love* heard that brother *Touchy's* feelings were hurt by Deacon *Faithful*, he said, with a most significant smile, "No wonder!"

2. *Be careful that you do not indulge a resentment disproportionate to the offence given.* The offence may have originated in inconsiderateness, or a misapprehension of your conduct, or some occasional impulse; and the offender may disapprove and lament his conduct. A merited resentment will be justified by public sentiment, and is tolerated by Christianity. "Be ye angry, and sin not." But a fierce and unreason-

able resentment will place you in the wrong, and give the offender the advantage of you. I well remember such a case. Sister *Touchy*, who is more excitable, and generally more easily pacified than her husband, was offended by a member of the church. The offending sister saw and confessed her fault, and ingenuously asked forgiveness. The offence was slight, but confession, instead of extinguishing, roused the resentment of sister *Touchy* to a perfect flame, which had well nigh caused her exclusion from the church. So, my brethren, you see it is not only important that you should be right in the beginning of a contest, but that you should continue right to the end.

3. *Be certain when you are offended to go with your complaints to the offending brother himself.* "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." This is the divine rule; and experience has demonstrated its wisdom. If you permit any supposed flagrancy of the offence, or your imaginary dignity, or the violence of your resentment, to prevent you from obeying this rule, you make yourselves offenders. The object of your displeasure may be innocent, but you are not; you offend against your brethren and against Christ; and if you know your duty, and obstinately refuse to do it, you must settle the controversy with Him whose authority you set at naught.

4. *Be always ready to forgive those who have offended you, on the first sign of their repentance.* If thy brother "trespass against thee seven times in a

day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." You cannot judge men's hearts. If an offending brother says, I repent, he may be sincere—God knoweth—"charity hopeth all things;" and you are bound to forgive him. And if you have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, you will forgive him fully and gladly.

5. *Constantly bear in mind that God exercises greater patience towards you than you are called to exercise towards any man.* Our offences against God have been causeless, multiplied, and aggravated; and yet he has forgiven them freely and fully, and at the first moment of our hearty repentance. And can we cherish, in view of God's compassion to us, an implacable spirit toward those, who have, in comparison, so slightly offended us? Shall we imitate the example of the wicked servant, whose master forgave him ten thousand talents because he had nothing to pay, and who inexorably demanded of his fellow servant the payment of fifty pence? A hard, unforgiving spirit is incompatible with the existence of piety, and the salvation of the soul. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

My brethren, I have a word of advice for you, relative to *Sensitive Christians.* Deal gently with them. They are much to be pitied. They are frequently an annoyance to their brethren; but their worst enemies could hardly desire that they should harass and pun-

* Mat. vi: 15.

ish themselves more than they do. You would not handle a man roughly who has no skin on his flesh. The *Touchy* family are more sensitive mentally than such a man would be bodily. Act toward them as, under a change of circumstances, you would have them to act toward you. Christians of this class are scattered through all the churches, perhaps, among other things, to exercise our patience, gentleness, and long suffering—important Christian graces—and also to teach us, by comparison, how much those of us who have a sound nervous system, and the power of governing our tempers, are indebted to the Former of our bodies, and the Sanctifier of our spirits.

Fearing that I have incurred the everlasting displeasure of brother *Touchy, and all his family and relatives*, I can and do appeal to the Searcher of hearts for the purity of my motives, the disinterestedness of my aims, and the truthfulness of my delineations.

LECTURE XII.

CENSORIOUS CHRISTIANS.

My brethren, we are no where forbidden in the Scriptures to form candid and just opinions of men's conduct and characters, however evil they may be; or, from proper motives, to give utterance to these opinions. We are permitted to judge of false prophets by their fruits.* "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment,"† is a rule of our divine Lord. But *Censoriousness* is a disposition to judge hastily, partially, and harshly, and to give needless expression to the false judgment. This evil is distinctly and emphatically condemned by the Spirit of inspiration. "Put them in mind," says Paul, "to speak evil of no man."‡ "Judge not," says Jesus, "that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."‖ The God who interdicts murder and blasphemy, with equal clearness and authority forbids evil surmising, rash judgments, and evil speaking. A censorious disposition indicates a bad heart—a heart wholly, or in part,

* Mat. vii: 16. † John vii; 24. ‡ Tit. iii: 2.
‖ Mat. vii: 1, 2.

unsanctified—a heart selfish, envious, ambitious, and misanthropic. It will generally be found that the *Censorious* are guilty of sins greater than those which they denounce; and sometimes they vent their indignation on the very sins which they themselves commit. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost the same things."*

We have recorded in the Scriptures a remarkable and instructive specimen of the fault-finding spirit.† John, the harbinger of Christ, was a man of abstemious habits: he "came neither eating nor drinking." The Jews found fault with him. "They say, He hath a devil." None but a demoniac would wholly abstain from the generous foods and exhilarating drinks which a gracious Providence has furnished for our nourishment and comfort. Well, to obviate their objection, Jesus was more sociable in his manners. He "came eating and drinking." Still, the Jews found fault. "They say, Behold, a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Never were accusations more unreasonable. Jesus was indeed the friend of publicans and sinners, and he did partake with a grateful heart of the wholesome food and drink common in that day and country; but that he indulged in the slightest excess of eating or drinking was a groundless and base insinuation. They

* Rom. ii: 1. † Mat. xi: 18, 19.

were, in truth, a censorious generation, resolved not to be pleased—equally offended with piping or mourning, with austerity or sociableness. That generation has long since passed away; but their spirit survives them, and displays itself in endless surmises, cavils, and denunciations.

Censoriousness is a very *prevalent* evil. It has infected every class of society, and rages as an epidemic within the precincts of many Christian churches. It would be curious, and might prove instructive, to estimate what proportion of the words in many refined and pious circles are words of suspicion, detraction, censure, and ridicule. How often are God, the soul, and eternity forgotten in the eager discussion of the frailties, blunders, and misdoings of poor, erring mortals. These fault-finders well nigh reverse the apostolic injunction—"Speak evil of no man," and speak evil of all men.

Censoriousness is a very *great* evil. Its bitter fruits are alienation, strifes, the disgrace of the church, the curse of souls, the discouragement of good men, and the triumph of the ungodly. We have known the peace of families and the prosperity of neighborhoods, as well as the respectability and usefulness of individuals, utterly subverted by this spirit, and its progeny of misrepresentation, fault-finding, and slanders. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."*

* Jas. iii: 6.

It is not easy to delineate the character of *Censorious Christians.* Censoriousness exists in degrees so various, and may be compounded with so many good and so many bad qualities, that no individual can be considered as a fair representative of the Class. As, however, brother *Carper* is one of this Class, and as I have the advantage of an intimate acquaintance with him, I have resolved to introduce him to my audience.

He descended of the *Hategood* family; but grace has made him differ very widely from his kindred. Few doubt his piety, though all must see that it is not of the most lovely and attractive type. His temperament is choleric. From one class of vices none can be freer than he. To the excessive indulgence of his appetites he has no temptation. A change of circumstances might make him an anchorite, but not an epicure nor an inebriate. But to another class of sins he is peculiarly prone. Evil surmising, fault-finding, and their kindred evils, seem in his nature to find a congenial and fruitful soil. His mind is singularly constituted. It is almost blind to beauties, excellencies, and advantages; but it has a keen perception of defects, deformities, and disadvantages. He scans every thing to discover its imperfections; and of rare excellence must that object be in which he does not find them. Human character is a mixture of good and evil; and the most we can reasonably hope to find in the best is a great preponderance of the good over the evil. In judging of human conduct we must distinguish between what is habitual and what is oc-

casional—between what springs from principle and what from impulse; we must weigh motives, make due allowance for surrounding circumstances, and then judge charitably. But brother *Carper* judges all men by the same unbending rule; he makes no allowance for youth, inexperience, sudden temptation, past rectitude, prompt repentance, and full reparation: all must be measured on the same Procrustean bedstead.

But this brother's character may be best illustrated by a few striking facts in his life. Long after he professed hope in the Gospel, he was kept out of the church by its manifold imperfections. He saw many inconsistencies among its members—he deemed the pastor a good man, but not quite sound in the faith; the worship of the church was not according to his taste; and its discipline was less rigorous than he thought the Scriptures demanded. The truth is, he had by chance got possession of some of the writings of Robert Sandeman, of Scotland, and his religious sentiments received a bias from that distinguished, but rigid author. After years of instruction and persuasion, Mr. *Carper* so far yielded his scruples as to be baptized, and unite with the church. As he was an intelligent, respectable, and on some accounts, worthy man, his entrance into the church was hailed with delight; but it was the beginning of trouble.

Brother *Carper* soon began to prove a serious trial to his pastor. He felt that it was his duty to exercise a very strict and constant watch-care over him, to correct his mistakes, and point out his faults; and

he followed his vocation in no very lovely spirit. The pastor deemed it proper to deliver a series of sermons on a highly important paragraph of Scripture. They were carefully prepared, earnestly delivered, and listened to by the congregation with decided interest; but brother *Carper* took offence. It seemed to him unreasonable that so many sermons should be founded on a single text; and he entered into some curious, and, as he supposed, instructive calculations, to ascertain how many sermons and how much time would be required at this rate to expound the whole Bible. His occasional frowns and studied inattention during the delivery of the sermons, as well as remarks made here and there, without any tender regard to the minister's feelings, indicated pretty plainly how deep an impression the calculation had made on his own heart. But as he could neither change the purpose of his pastor, nor arrest the prolix discussion, he withdrew for several Sabbaths to churches where the sermons bore, in his estimation, a more suitable proportion to the length of the text.

Square-toed boots were just coming into fashion, and the pastor, all unconscious of guilt or mischief, bought a pair. At the close of the Sunday morning sermon, brother *Carper*, taking the pastor aside, said to him—"Brother *Freeman*, you have hurt my feelings to-day very much." "Ah!" replied the Elder, "how did I do it? I am sure I did not intend to do it." "Why," said *Carper*, "you have put on square-toed boots—you are following the fashion—I'm sure

Elder *Worthall* would not do such a thing." A discussion ensued. The pastor endeavored to convince him that there was neither good nor evil in the shape of his boots—and that he purchased them not because they were fashionable, but fitted his feet, and were durable and cheap; but *Carper* was not a man to be silenced by arguments. As Elder *Freeman* was a mild and conciliating man, he said—"Well, brother *Carper*, though I see no evil in wearing boots with square toes, yet as my doing so wounds your feelings, I will not wear them again." "Yes, but," replied brother *Carper*, more excited than before, "you think it right to wear them—you justify the practice—and this is as bad as wearing them." Finding it impossible to heal the wound, the grieved pastor went his way. *Carper* would gladly have formed a party in the church in opposition to this worldly innovation; but, beyond his own family, his views met with but little countenance, and his efforts served to strengthen rather than overthrow the pastor's influence.

The church music was a source of perpetual annoyance to brother *Carper*. His views on the subject of church singing were, in the main, quite scriptural. He maintained that in public worship the singing should be congregational, intelligent, and spiritual; and these views were generally conceded to be sound. But he was bitterly opposed, not only to instrumental music, but also to employing choirs to conduct singing in public worship. He thought that Christians should do their own singing, and that unbelievers

should receive no more encouragement to lead in public singing than in public prayer. For entertaining these opinions, and endeavoring in kindness to defend and spread them, none could blame him: but he could not sing himself, made no effort to acquire the art of singing, or to have others improved in it; and yet he found fault with the singing. Others gave their attention, time, and money to improve the church music, lamented that it was not better, and that the congregation was so little qualified and inclined to participate in this delightful part of worship; but brother *Carper* did nothing but find fault.

It is needless to multiply statements of this kind. It would be difficult to name a practice or act of the church, relating to worship, discipline, or economy, with which brother *Carper* was not more or less dissatisfied. He had a singular affinity for the minority, and if he was ever found with the majority it was purely accidental. He was opposed to renting pews; it was a respecting of persons—to giving pastors a stipulated salary; it tended to make them mercenary—to a permanent appointment of pastors; it encouraged their idleness—to the erection of fine, as he called neat and convenient, houses of worship; they engendered pride—in short, he was opposed to old things, because they were antiquated, and to new things, because they were innovations. In truth, had he been in Paradise with his captious, restless spirit, he would have been dissatisfied. Its light would have been too glaring; its music too rapturous; and his

soul would have loathed its fruits, as did the Israelites the manna in the desert.

In a philanthropic spirit brother *Carper* did not appear to be deficient—at least, he was not in professions of it. He saw, exaggerated, and deplored the evils, moral and physical, abounding in the world; but he was violently opposed to all the methods adopted by the wise and good for their removal or mitigation. His philanthropy usually evaporated in fault-finding and denunciation. He had greater sympathy for remote than contiguous evils. All around him were neglected subjects of depravity, want, and misery; but his thoughts were occupied with crimes and woes afar off, which his imagination magnified, and which afforded him ample scope for indulging, with impunity, his peculiar humor. The practicability of redressing evils was with him a sufficient reason for neglecting them. Their relief would call into exercise certain qualities—patience, beneficence, and industry—which would suspend or embarrass his favorite occupation of fault-finding. Verily, his philanthropy bears a strong resemblance to misanthropy. Whether a disposition to magnify evils, to denounce with bitterness, and without discrimination, their real or supposed authors, and to neglect or oppose every practical method for their alleviation, is to be traced to a misguided philanthropy, or to a covert misanthropy, I leave to be determined by the Searcher of Hearts.

One thing may be said in favor—if, indeed, it is in

favor—of Mr. *Carper*. He seems to be actuated by a high sense of justice. If he finds fault with others, he is quite willing that they should find fault with him. He is not merely willing, but desirous to receive railing for railing, or denunciation for denunciation. He deems the love of popularity one of the crying evils of the day; and even prejudice cannot accuse him of sharing in its guilt. He covets reproach, and glories in being despised; for, in his judgment, reproach and infamy are the surest tests of wisdom, fidelity, and usefulness. He considers himself enriched and ennobled by censures, especially such as are directed against his idiosyncracy. You cannot inflict on him a more painful wound than not to notice, or to treat with kindness his censures.

In church discipline, as might reasonably be supposed, brother *Carper* is exceedingly rigorous. He considers the exercise of discipline one of the greatest church privileges. He may be absent from the prayer or communion meeting from slight excuses; but from meetings for the exercise of church discipline, nothing but invincible necessity can detain him. In the reception of members to church fellowship, he is excessively cautious and rigid; and he is always lamenting that candidates for membership are admitted with so little knowledge, especially as to what constitutes the turpitude of sin, and so little experience of the efficacy of divine grace. His very presence is a terror to young converts, and the questions which he propounds to them would frequently perplex a

Doctor of Divinity. For offenders in the church he makes no allowances, and feels no pity. Excommunication is, in his estimation, a sovereign panacea for the diseases of the body ecclesiastic. His policy resembles that of a surgeon who should resort to amputation for the relief of every wound, however slight and easily healed. He voted for the exclusion of sister *Tasteful*, because she purchased a piano for her daughter; of brother *Independent*, because he united with a Free Mason's Lodge; and of brother *Supple*, because he attended a Fourth of July barbecue; and sought earnestly to eject Elder *Freeman* from the pastorate of the church because he was opposed to making Total Abstinence from all intoxicating drinks a term of church membership.

From two or three considerations I would briefly dissuade my brethren from indulging a *Censorious* spirit.

1. It is *wrong*. God hates, forbids, and will punish it.

2. It is *injurious*. Many are irritated and driven to excesses, but none are reformed by it.

3. It is *ignoble*—the mark of a contracted, selfish, petulent mind. To excel in fault-finding requires neither genius, learning, nor study; but a suspicious temper, a malignant heart, and a tattling tongue.

LECTURE XIII.

OBSTINATE CHRISTIANS.

We do not mean by *Obstinate Christians* such as have a clear perception of duty, a settled purpose to perform it, and an indomitable energy in the prosecution of their schemes; or those who possess, what is strikingly delineated by Foster, *decision of character.* These constitute the most excellent and efficient class of Christians. They are the men who erect churches, conduct Sunday schools, found and endow colleges, form and execute plans for extending the empire of truth and righteousness—in a word, the working men of Christ's kingdom. *Obstinacy* is decision of charter, without the needed restraints of prudence, modesty and kindness—a compound of pride, self-conceit, scrupulosity and moroseness—the luxuriant and thorny offshoot of a noble and fruit-bearing tree—right, over rigid, hardened into wrong. I need hardly say that this is a prevalent evil. Few churches are free from its malign influence. Pastors, deacons, and old and wealthy church members, are most likely to be infected with it. It is a most mischievous quality. The *Obstinate Christian* is heedless as to the rights and feelings of his brethren, reckless as to the conse-

quences of his own conduct, and, though impelled by what he deems a conscientious regard to duty, is by no means scrupulous as to the means of accomplishing his purposes. In meetings for church discipline he is almost invariably a pest; disregarding alike the rights and feelings of the majority or the minority, if they oppose his views. Our public meetings for devising and prosecuting plans for enlarging the Redeemer's kingdom, which should ever be characterized by affection and harmony, are too frequently, through his perverseness, converted into an arena for bitter discussion and offensive personalities. *Obstinacy, Christian obstinacy*, if I may so call it, is the author of confusion, the fomenter of strife, the father of schism, and the reproach of Christianity. This evil quality exists in different Christians in various degrees, and mingled with various excellencies and infirmities.

I propose to delineate some of the evils of *obstinacy* as I have seen them in the life of *Deacon Headstrong*. He is, in many respects, a man of rare worth. In the prosperity of the church none doubts that he feels a very deep and steady interest. Forty years he has been a member of it, and more than thirty years he has discharged the duties of the deaconship. He knew the church in its infancy, has sympathized in its various trials and triumphs, and has contributed greatly by his money and personal attention to its present elevation. He remembers when the church met in a small "upper room," saw the foundation of

the first church edifice laid, assisted in enlarging its dimensions, and finally contributed, with noble liberality, to the erection of a new, spacious and beautiful house of worship. He has attended the funerals of several pastors, and been the fast friend, and judicious counsellor of all, from Elder *Trueman* down to Elder *Timothy*. The *Deacon* is the *Gaius* of the church. He keeps open doors, and entertains ministers and Christian brethren with an ever-flowing hospitality. His house resembles more a free Christian hotel than a private dwelling. Nor does his liberality exhaust itself in hospitality; but being independent and prosperous, almost every beneficent and religious enterprise shares in his benefactions. Nor do his alms go up to Heaven without his prayers. He is a man of warm heart, and sincere, devoted piety. He is scrupulous to a fault, for it is frequently apparent, especially since he has grown old, that he mistakes a settled purpose for the dictates of conscience. What he wishes to do, he conscientiously thinks ought to be done; and he is equally convinced that others, as well as himself, should be governed by the dictates of his conscience. On the whole, however, the *Deacon* is a pillar in the church. His good sense, sterling piety and great energy have secured for him a strong influence among his brethren.

A great pity it is that a character so bright as that of *Deacon Headstrong* should be spotted; but spotted it is. He is *obstinate;* and every body knows it but himself. He possessed naturally a strong will,

and unwavering purpose, and time, instead of rendering him cautious and conciliatory, has made him unyielding, dogmatic and morose. He will have his own way, or he will do nothing. When in a good humor, he is a host in himself; but when a fit of *obstinacy* overtakes him, he is a grief to the church and a stumbling block in the path of sinners. He is not always unyielding. There are times, and they are neither rare nor brief, when he is mild, gentle, conciliating, and even pliable. It were difficult to say on what his obstinacy depends. In the decision of weighty matters, and matters which deeply interest him, he may not betray any self-will; but in the decision of a trifling question, he may grow determined and overbearing. When once he has fairly taken his stand, the matter is ended. Had you the wisdom of Solomon, the authority of Peter, the zeal of Paul, and the eloquence of Apollos, you might reason, remonstrate and labor with him in vain. You might as well preach to a sullen ox, or an intractable mule, as to him. He is not the man to be convinced, or persuaded against his once firmly expressed opinion. He does not, I presume, believe himself infallible; but, on such an occasion, he acts as if he did most fully. If the church decides any matter contrary to his judgment, (an event which does not often occur,) and he plants himself in hostility to the decision; then, if by any means, she can change that decision she will find it greatly to her peace. The Deacon will be put into the best possible humor, and will exert himself

to promote her prosperity. But should she prove refractory, that is, assert her rights, she may anticipate trouble. The grum and shaded countenance of *Deacon Headstrong*, his shy and silent demeanor, his changing his seat in the sanctuary, his refusal to pray in the prayer-meeting, and his neglect of his official duties, indicate but too clearly the gathering storm. The church is now in a dilemma. Something ought to be done—that is clear—but what, the wisest are at a loss to determine. The *Deacon* is wrong—this every body admits, except himself and a few partizans; but he is a good man—an old and venerated member—a valuable *Deacon*—has many warm friends in the church and in the community—can raise a respectable party in his behalf—and all would deprecate any rash measures in the case. What can be done? Deacon *Makepeace* proposes that the subject shall be permitted to rest, that time may lend its influence to heal the breach. The proposal is readily concurred in by the church. The matter rests, so far as busy-bodies will permit. Months glide away, but there sits *Deacon Headstrong*, in a remote part of the sanctuary, with the same morose and clouded countenance, and the same look of determination. The truth is, there are but two courses to pursue. The church must either take the *Deacon* under discipline, with the prospect of agitation, faction, and schism before her eyes; or retrace her steps.

On such occasions the *Deacon* is not particularly desirous to render a reason for his course. The

church is under great obligations to him—he contributed liberally towards the erection of her beautiful house of worship—has done much to promote her welfare—is entitled to respect on account of his age—and it is but reasonable that his *wishes* should be regarded.

I must notice particularly one event in the history of this good man, which caused him great grief, and gave his enemies an occasion to reproach him. He had an altercation with his pastor. It was not, at first, serious. It might have been easily settled. Had the controversy arisen between *Deacon Makepeace* and the pastor it would have been quickly and pleasantly adjusted. But *Deacon Headstrong* was irascible and unyielding; and the pastor was indiscreet, and not faultless. Every effort to heal the dissension widened the breach. Parties were soon formed in the church; and discussions engendered bitterness. The *Deacon* was supported by the Trustees of the church, and by the old and wealthy members; and the pastor was followed by the young, the active, and the devout. As the obstinacy of the *Deacon* and the imprudence of the pastor precluded the possibility of an amicable settlement of the difficulty, a division of the church ensued. The right to the property being with the *Deacon* and his party, the pastor and his adherents seceded from the church. It was a sad event—a reproach to Christianity, and a grief to good men. None, however, so deeply deplored it as the *Deacon*. He loved the church as his own life—had toiled long, and made great sacrifices for it—had

watched its growth with pride and pleasure—and now to see it rent asunder and disgraced was a calamity almost too great for him to bear. He wept as he would have done at the death of his first-born; and was exceedingly anxious to convince his friends that he had done all in his power to prevent the unfortunate division.

Every body knew that the obstinacy of *Deacon Headstrong* had caused the secession from the church; but his most intimate friend could not express this conviction without forfeiting his favor. This *Elder Candid* learned from experience. The *Deacon*, anxious to secure the good opinion of the *Elder*, commenced giving him a minute account of the causes which had led to a rupture in the church. In order that the conclusion might be such as he desired, he deemed it proper to gain the assent of *Candid* to all his own views as he proceeded in the narrative. He soon stated a principle of discipline from which the *Elder* dissented. This was unfortunate for *Headstrong*. It was the very point at which he had been most strongly pressed by his opponents. If that principle was not admitted his course could not be vindicated. *Candid*, knowing the temper of his friend, would gladly have avoided the discussion of the question. He endeavored to waive it, but in vain. The *Deacon* was resolved to convince him of the soundness of the principle. The *Elder* listened long and patiently to the arguments in its support, and was desirous that the narrative should be resumed. But

Headstrong would not proceed until he was satisfied that his brother agreed with him on this point. "Are you convinced that I am right?" inquired the *Deacon*. "I am not," answered the *Elder*. "What reasons can you give for the opposite opinion?" continued the *Deacon*. Finding his attempts to evade discussion ineffectual, the *Elder* clearly stated his opinion, and very calmly and forcibly the arguments in its support. The speech was like a dagger piercing the heart of poor Mr. *Headstrong*. It was a repetition of the very arguments which he had heard from his opponents. He plainly perceived that failing to convince the *Elder* on that point, his conclusion would be favorable to the seceding party which had caused him so much distress, and he abruptly closed the discussion by saying, "Brother *Candid*, I am old enough to be your *father*." The *Elder* was bound to admit the correctness of the remark, and had age always been accompanied by wisdom, he would have been convinced as well as silent. From that time *Headstrong* counted the excellent *Candid* an enemy.

One law of Christ this good man invariably, so far as I am informed, transgresses. It is this—"If thy brother shall trespass against thee go tell him his fault, between thee and him alone." He is not ignorant of the law—he greatly prizes it as a rule of conduct for others—and it must be conceded that as a disciplinarian he has sound judgment, great experience and discretion, and no ordinary tact—but when offended himself, a false view of his dignity, with a

certain stubbornness of disposition, prevents him from seeking a personal and private explanation. The offender, he thinks, should come to him. The offense has been unprovoked, and the reparation should be spontaneous.

Deacon Headstrong, though resembling him in some points, differs widely in others, from *Deacon Diotrephes.** They are both self-willed, obstinate, and uncontrollable; but *Diotrephes* is selfish, malicious, aspiring merely after power and preëminence; while *Headstrong* is disinterested, pious, and seeking only the welfare of the church. The same natural disposition is showing itself in the depravity of *Diotrephes*, and the piety of *Headstrong*. In the one it is an infirmity, an evil, which grace has not yet remedied—in the other it is the unchecked current of an unsanctified heart. *Deacon Headstrong* often sees, bitterly laments, and earnestly combats his besetting sin; but *Diotrephes* glories in his influence, distinction, and deeds. Whether grace would have made *Diotrephes* such a man as *Deacon Headstrong*, I cannot say; but quite certain I am, that *Headstrong*, without grace, would greatly resemble *Diotrephes*.

I can hardly think of *Deacon Headstrong* without weeping. I love him, and more, I admire him for his sincerity, his integrity, his generosity, his pious labors; in short, every thing but his morose, overbearing obstinacy. Cured of this infirmity, he would be

* 3 John ix.

a priceless jewel in any church. As it is, his influence is equivocal—his good is evil spoken of—his brethren love him and dread him—they cannot well do without him, nor well do with him. He is the pastor's best friend, wisest counsellor, firmest supporter, and greatest grief. He is an honor and reproach to the Christian cause; his piety none doubts, and his infirmity every body sees; his over-bearing course fills discreet Christians with sorrow, weak Christians with resentment, and affords amusement to sceptics and cavilers.

I have already intimated that *Obstinate Christians* are a numerous class; but few of them, however, compare favorably with *Deacon Headstrong*. He is, certainly, one of the best of his class. None is more obstinate than he; but he possesses so many redeeming qualities, that we almost forget, and readily forgive his obstinacy. Many are not only obstinate, but ignorant, weak-minded, selfish, irrascible, indiscreet, and good for nothing. I am sorry from my heart to see the Deacon in such bad company; and I am surprised that a man of his sense and worth does not perceive the qualities which usually distinguish his class, and abandon it. By the way, I am reminded that *Deacon Firmly*, whose character was bordering on obstinacy, was greatly profited by witnessing the perverseness of his much loved brother, *Headstrong*. He saw so clearly the folly and mischief of a dogged and uncontrollable self-will in the conduct of *Deacon Headstrong*, that he heartily loathed it, and was

greatly assisted in guarding against that tendency in his own disposition. So we may thank God, not only for the good the *Deacon* accomplishes by his direct and liberal efforts, but for the good which grace extracts from his evil example.

I offer a few remarks to *Obstinate Christians*—

1. Consider that other persons have minds, and knowledge, and feelings, and rights as well as yourselves; and that to these you should pay due respect. You owe kindness, courtesy, and gentleness to every human being with whom you may have intercourse. If you were isolated you might pursue your own way without restraint or injustice; but you are members of society, and society can be maintained in harmony only by mutual concessions and forbearance. Obstinate men are unfit for society. A church composed of obstinate members would more resemble a menagerie of untamed beasts than the gentle flock of Christ.

2. Remember that you are, like other men, liable to err in judgment. You have had so many opportunities of seeing your mistakes and follies, that I am amazed that you should still expect others to confide in you as infallible. Can your blunders never teach you to distrust your own judgments? "He that thinketh he knoweth anything, knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

3. Be always willing, especially in matters which personally concern you, to be guided by the wisdom and experience of the disinterested. You are not re-

quired in any case to violate the dictates of your consciences; but be careful that you do not mistake your inclinations and settled purposes for these. This is your danger. Men are often conscientiously wrong. "I verily thought with myself," said Paul, "that I *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which things I also did." And yet his conduct, as he subsequently saw and confessed, was extremely wicked.

4. Bear in mind that your *obstinacy*, while it may enable you to carry some favorite points, will greatly diminish your influence and usefulness. All men listen with pleasure to the suggestions of the gentle, the unassuming, and the conciliating; but the words of the self-willed and overbearing are heard with distrust and dissatisfaction. Most men are willing to follow a leader, but no man wishes to be dictated to.

5. The best corrective of your evil disposition is to witness its fruits in others. I am sure you will hate your own image in your neighbor's face. If you can see the obstinate man, supplying the lack of reason by the strength of his inclination, and pursuing his useless way unmindful of the wishes of friends, and the rights of his associates, without loathing the disposition, and resolving, and fervently praying, to be freed from it, you are incurable.

In conclusion, my brethren, let us all guard against this evil. Obstinacy begets obstinacy. In dealing with an obstinate man we instinctively place ourselves in an attitude of firmness and defiance. Igno-

rance, stupidity, and depravity may, and probably will, be obstinate; but to yield when we cannot longer contend with dignity; to acknowledge our wrong when we are convinced of it; to retrace our steps when equity or prudence demands it; and to be conciliating and gentle in our dealings with men, even the obstinate, are marks of an ingenuous and noble mind; and whoever may be lacking in these qualities, the Christian should not, and the enlightened and consistent Christian will not be.

LECTURE XIV.

SPECULATIVE CHRISTIANS.

I DO not by *Speculative* mean *Inquisitive Christians.* Inquisitiveness is one of our instincts, conferred on us by our beneficent Creator for a noble purpose. It is the intellectual appetite for appropriate nourishment. When duly directed and regulated, it is the mainspring of the attainments in knowledge and wisdom, on which, in a great measure, Christian usefulness depends. I would that Christians were more inquisitive to understand God's words and ways than they are. Nor is *Speculation* in itself an evil. God has endowed us with a capacity for speculation; and he does not interdict its exercise, even on religious subjects. Let us be careful not to confound the objects of faith and the objects of speculation—the truths of revelation and the deductions of reason; and no mischief can arise from the boldest flights of imagination, or the most startling deductions of reason. By *Speculative Christians*, I mean such as are more curious than practical—more disposed to dive into profound subjects than to profit by such as are clear. We have a specimen of this curiosity in the conduct of Peter. "Lord," said he, "and what shall this

man do?" referring to John. A thousand important questions pertaining to duty and interest he might have asked; but he propounded one of idle curiosity, and Jesus rebuked his prying disposition. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."* This class of Christians is not very numerous, but may be found interspersed through all the churches. They are always useless, generally harmless, but sometimes their notions engender strife and divisions.

I shall make no apology for introducing to this audience an eminent *Speculatist—Elder Clever*—as I am sure I cannot more clearly describe the class of Christians under consideration than by furnishing a brief memoir of his life.

Elder Clever possessed a peculiar intellect. He was remarkable rather for imagination than for judgment—for curiosity than for the power of analysis. He always seemed disposed to dive to the bottom, or rise to the summit of every subject which attracted his attention. When he was a school-boy he spent much time in fruitless efforts to invent a perpetual motion, and frequently supposed he had attained his object. Mr. *Clever's* experience was very singular. He seemed quite conscious of his depravity and guilt, and was occasionally deeply anxious about his state; but his mind was perplexed concerning the mode of the Spirit's operation in a sinner's conversion, and the nature of Christ's atonement. A fact, how-

* John xx: 21, 22.

ever, will better serve to display his peculiar mental tendency. He attended a meeting of deep religious interest and feeling. Many were converted, and rejoicing in Christ. Mr. *Clever* was awakened, overwhelmed, and bathed in tears. He came to Elder *Kindman*, and desired to have a private interview with him, to which the Elder kindly and promptly assented, for he had marked his distress. Being at a country house of worship, they took a long walk into the forest, and after seating themselves, young *Clever* commenced: "Mr. *Kindman*, I have long desired to have a private conversation with you. I have a question to ask, which I hope you will be able to answer: *Can you tell me who Melchisedec was?*" The Elder scarcely knew whether to laugh or weep at the unexpected and profitless question. After some years of inquiry, and occasional seasons of anxiety, Mr *Clever* obtained confidence to offer himself as a candidate for membership in the *Soaring* church, in the district of *Utopia*. His experience was deemed satisfactory, and very favorable anticipations of his usefulness were entertained.

The thoughts of Mr. *Clever* were soon directed to the subject of his entrance on the Christian ministry. The brethren warmly seconded his desires, and he commenced a course of studies preparatory to his expected vocation. Of his college course I have no information, except that his studies were desultory, his attainments superficial, and he was well pleased with his own progress. During his theological term, he

much neglected his text books, for German authors of the Transcendental school, and certain English poets and essayists of the same stamp. He finished his studies, returned to *Utopia*, and was considered by many members of the *Soaring* church one of the brightest geniuses. At this time, as I resided not far from the same district, my acquaintance with brother *Clever* commenced. I assisted in his ordination. He preached a sermon before the Presbytery from the words—"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."* I need say nothing of the sermon, but that I could not understand it. I doubted the propriety of his ordination, but was overruled by the Presbytery, and yielded to the earnest solicitation of the church.

Soon after his ordination, he came to my study, in great haste, inquiring whether I had "Locke on the Human Understanding," "Stewart's Philosophy," and other metaphysical works, whose titles I have now forgotten. I asked him what use he wished to make of them, and he informed me that he was preparing a sermon on the subject of faith, and desired to have a more distinct conception of the mental process of believing. I endeavored, but in vain, to convince him that the Bible would answer the purpose of making believers better than any works on mental philosophy. I never learned the result of his sermon.

* Rom. viii: 20.

While he was a young man, he preached a discourse from the text, "O wheel,"* in the presence of Elder *Plainman*, a clear-headed, sound theologian. The sermon was one of *Clever's* most labored and towering efforts. He was exceedingly anxious to know what opinion Elder *Plainman* had formed of it; and he repeatedly intimated, pretty clearly, that he entertained this desire; but the judicious Elder continued silent on the subject. At length the young man's curiosity overcame his modesty, and he said, "Father *Plainman*, I should like very much to know what opinion you entertain of my sermon on the wheel." The Elder was a man of few words, and he briefly replied, "It was too deep for me, brother *Clever*, too deep." Young *Clever* was chagrined at the implied rebuke, but soon forgot it amid the lavish encomiums bestowed on him by some of the members of the *Soaring* church.

I could frequently learn from his admirers the favorite themes of his ministry. The *Origin of Evil* was to him a prolific subject of discourse. On this topic he poured forth sermon after sermon, each, in the judgment of his admirers, exceeding all its predecessors in depth and power. How sin could originate in a perfect being, was a puzzle to many until they heard *Clever* preach. On this point, particularly, he was supposed to shed new and satisfactory light. Another of his chosen themes was the *Identity of the*

* Ez. x: 13.

Body in the Resurrection. On this subject his hearers received, or had an opportunity of receiving, much light on human physiology, the numerous changes through which the human body is passing, and the thing which constitutes bodily identity. *Clever* boasted right heartily, no doubt, that *he* did not belong to that plodding class of preachers whose lot it is to revolve forever within the limits of a half-bushel; and many of his hearers were delighted that *they* had a pastor capable of discussing new and untried themes. The *Harmony of the Divine Decrees and Human Free Agency* was another subject which frequently called forth all the learning and powers of *Clever*. Many years ago I heard him preach a sermon on this subject, which so deeply imprinted itself on my mind that I now distinctly remember its outline. The text was—"*O Lord, revive thy work.*"* It was delivered during the progress of a glorious work of grace. Thus, after repeating his text, he commenced —"Here is a work—which supposes a workman—and thirdly, a rule to work by. Now a rule has two ends, and a middle; and the middle is equidistant from both ends." The plan of his sermon was thus marked out: He proposed to begin in the middle, and work toward the ends. The sermon was two hours in length, delivered with great earnestness, and was by some supposed to exceed in originality, profundity, and richness any effort which he had previously made.

* Hab. iii: 2.

My stock of Biblical knowledge was very meagre, and my mind rather averse to abstruse speculations, and unfortunately I could not appreciate the discourse. It was above, or below, my comprehension. As I came out of the house, I heard a member of the *Soaring* church say, seemingly in raptures, "Well, I never understood before how God could justly condemn a man for doing what he had fore-ordained that he should do."

Elder *Clever* was a great student of the Apocalypse. By repeated readings, and careful examinations, he came, so he and his admirers thought, to understand it better than any other portion of the Scriptures. For a time his ministry was entirely confined to its exposition. It was deemed a pity by many that views so recondite, so satisfactory, and so useful, should be longer concealed from the world. They were well understood and highly appreciated in *Utopia*, and especially by a portion of the *Soaring* church; but it was little better than robbery to keep them from the rest of the world. It was resolved that they should be written and printed; and to ensure their circulation, the pamphlet containing them was gratuitously distributed—*Clever*, in the ardor of his zeal, bearing most of the expense. He begins his exposition with modesty. If he is wrong, he hopes some wiser head will set him right—a pretty difficult task to perform. When he reaches in his comments the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, he finds a clear prediction of the suppression of the United States

Bank by General Jackson. By this time all his modesty has vanished, his light has become so clear that he writes as one possessing authority, and having disclosed the meaning of the Apocalyptic symbol, he abruptly inquires—"Reader, can you doubt it? If you do, you are damned as certainly as there is a God in heaven." But other, and less revolting thoughts were soon to take possession of his mind.

The truth of *Phrenology* I neither affirm nor deny. The science, if science it be, not coming within the scope of my professional studies, I have not found time to examine. Elder *Clever* was an early and ardent convert to the system. His belief in it gave a decided turn and character to his preaching. One could not listen to his discourse, either in the pulpit or in private, without clearly perceiving that he had studied *Phrenology*. All his estimates of human conduct, all his prospects of success in the ministry, and all his schemes of usefulness, were based upon, or modified by it. "This," I heard him say, "is *the science.*" But a fact, better than mere statements, will illustrate the state of his mind. His wife, unfortunately, was not pious. A Christian minister was endeavoring to impress on her mind the importance of immediate attention to her salvation. Elder *Clever* interposed. "My wife," said he, "has *Conscientiousness* and *Veneration* well developed; but she is wanting in *Ideality* and *Order;* and in spite of all the minister's efforts he was forced into a discussion on *Phrenological* points; and the poor woman, in considering

the bumps on her cranium, forgot that she had a soul to be saved or lost.

Another science, of still sublimer import, as Elder *Clever* thought, and of which I am equally ignorant and uncertain, soon gained and absorbed his attention. This was *Mesmerism*. A few experiments convinced him of its truth; and he quickly swallowed and digested the whole system: the *reality of the Mesmeric sleep, sympathy between the Mesmerizer and the person Mesmerized, Phreno-Magnetism, Clairvoyance, and all.* Great and important results, he believed and taught, were to flow from the progress of Mesmeric science. By it, the immortality of the soul, the intervention of spiritual agents in the affairs of mortals, and other important principles were, he thought, irrefutably established. So direct and important was the bearing which he supposed it to have on the progress of Christianity, that he lectured on it, and employed his pen to elucidate and confirm it. Indeed, he considered the recently developed laws of *Animal Magnetism* as a sort of new revelation to mankind, in harmony with the Bible, as the Old and New Testaments are in harmony with each other.

But it is time I should notice the influence of Mr. *Clever's* ministry in the *Soaring* congregation. To many his preaching was distasteful—chiefly those who, removing from other places into *Utopia*, had their tastes, in regard to sermons, formed before their settlement there. Some were not profited by his ministrations — they could scarcely tell why; for they

readily admitted that he was a learned, profound, and eloquent divine; and they could not avoid feeling some pride that they attended on the ministry of so distinguished an orator. Others, again—and they were numerous in the *Soaring* church—were delighted with his preaching. "He," said they, "is the man for us—we are fed by his sermons—we never understood the mysteries of the Gospel until we heard him." Elder *Plainman* was invited by the pastor, as a matter of courtesy, to deliver a sermon to the *Soaring* church. He was a clear, sound, searching, practical preacher; but the admirers of *Clever* were greatly scandalized by his pointed discourse. Some evinced their disapprobation by shaking their heads—some by attempting to go to sleep—others by their listlessness—and a few by leaving the house. One effect of Elder *Clever's* preaching was obvious. Many of his hearers became too wise to be taught, even by him. They openly boasted of the depth and variety of their own speculations. Meanwhile, as no conversions occurred, and few additions from any quarter were made to the church, the congregation gradually dwindled. Dissensions arose, and matters were manifestly drawing to a crisis. Elder *Clever* launched into new speculations in *Geology* and the *Origin of the Human Race*, which not proving acceptable to the best-instructed members of the *Soaring* church, it only remained that he should send in his resignation. After a warm discussion, it was accepted by a decided majority — many, however, affirming that

Soaring church would never have another such pastor; and, pretty certainly, it never will.

My hearers may be curious to know what has become of Elder *Clever*—and that curiosity I will endeavor to gratify. He removed to *West Utopia*—boarded with an amiable family attached to the New Jerusalem church—was taken sick—was kindly treated by the family—regained his health—and with returning health, a new, refreshing, and glorious light, as he judged, shone on his mind from the writings of Baron Emanuel Swedenborg. He is now a member and teacher of the New Jerusalem church. All the lights of *Phrenology*, *Mesmerism*, and *Geology* mingle their rays to guide him through the mysteries and labyrinths of Swedenborgianism. He is perfectly at home in expounding the Scriptures in their natural, spiritual, and celestial import; and to him "*Divine Humanity*" is a theme as prolific of sermons, as, in former years, was the *Origin of Evil.* He now believes, honestly, no doubt, that all the world is insane, except the few who have been restored to their reason by the great apostle, *Swedenborg.*

Having, brethren and hearers, spent so much time in delineating the character of Elder *Clever*, I must leave you to make an application of this subject for yourselves—merely remarking that it is far better to practice what we know, than to aspire to know what is not revealed; and if we will do the will of God, we shall know of the doctrine, by whomsoever taught, whether it be of God, or whether it be of men.

LECTURE XV.

COVETOUS CHRISTIANS.

It may seem paradoxical to speak of *Covetous Christians.* Can a Christian be covetous? Does not grace subdue, in every sincere believer, the reigning power of selfishness? Is it not about as congruous to speak of an honest thief, or a temperate drunkard, as a covetous Christian? In what degree a Christian may be covetous I will not undertake to decide; but one thing I know, some church members are covetous. This class is, indeed, quite numerous, embracing not only private members, but also "bishops and deacons." No evil seems to be more rife, and of more baneful influence in the churches, than covetousness. I cannot better illustrate its nature and influence than by portraying the character of a church member with whom, doubtless, you are all well acquainted—*Father Gripe.*

In his early years, Mr. *Gripe* was rather dissipated —not particularly free in spending his money, but still not deemed by his associates penurious. In seasons of conviviality he would freely use his means for the indulgence of his appetites, and the entertainment of his friends; but afterwards he would be seriously

grieved at this extravagance. When he was about thirty years old, in a great revival which occurred in his neighborhood, he professed conversion, was baptized, and united with a very efficient church. He promised, for a season, to be a useful member. His habits were quite reformed—he was punctual in his attendance on religious meetings—and took an active part in church discipline; for prayer-meetings, however, he never evinced much fondness.

Mr. *Gripe* being industrious, and a good manager, and having withal an economical wife, began to prosper in his worldly circumstances, and soon became independent. Few members of the church were able to give so much to its support, and to the cause of Christian benevolence, as he. He was wealthy, his family inexpensive, and his resources constantly accumulating. His penuriousness, which was suspected by deacon *Careful*, from the commencement of his religious profession, was soon made apparent to all the church.

Under the faithful labors of Elder *Titus*, the church had become a large, strong and active body, and finding their place of worship too small for them, and in an unfavorable location, they entertained the purpose of erecting a house, in a more central position, better suited to their wants, and to the improved taste of the community. They were fully able to accomplish the object, and sound policy demanded that they should do so. Brother *Gripe* set himself in most active hostility to the scheme. Pride was at the bottom of it;

and God would certainly frown on it. But deacon *Liberal* supported the measure, promised a subscription of five hundred dollars to begin with, and the church sustained his views with an overwhelming majority. Brother *Gripe* found himself in a small minority, composed mostly of the *Saveall* family, with whom he was on terms of intimacy. The new house of worship was commenced, and soon completed —a most commodious and beautiful house, and an enduring monument of the enterprise and liberality of the church. But as the work was commenced contrary to the wish of brother *Gripe*, he could not reasonably be expected, so he said, to give any thing to aid it. He was opposed to the enterprise on principle. He maintained that a house of religious worship should be of the simplest, cheapest kind. One thing, however, struck many persons as being a little singular. The *Gripe* mansion was one of the finest in the neighborhood—large, convenient and costly. Some persons were reminded of the words of Bishop Lowth—"It argues a great contempt of God and religion, when men think no cost or finery too great to bestow on themselves, and the meanest accommodation good enough for the service of God."

Mr. *Gripe* was not yet out of difficulty. On entering the new house, the church, after much anxious consultation, resolved to rent the pews. This measure was more distasteful to him than the erection of the house. In favor of this there were some plausible arguments; but that, in his estimation, was dis-

criminating between the rich and poor—selling the Gospel—and fostering a spirit of pride and vanity. But he could not control the church in this matter; for even his friends, the *Savealls*, deserted him on this point. He was sorely chagrined, and after some delay, he resolved, to the no little joy of some of his brethren, to change his church relation.

He has now become an old man, and is generally known as *Father Gripe*. His wealth has increased with his years—he is now very rich—but nothing seems to open his heart or subdue his selfishness. He greatly prefers private to public charities. He acts, according to his own account of the matter, on the principle of not letting his left hand know what his right hand does; and truly his left hand is kept in profound ignorance on the subject. But as the church will have contributions for benevolent and religious purposes, he advocates public collections in preference to individual subscriptions, that all may have an opportunity of giving something; though, to my certain knowledge, on one occasion, when a collection was taken up for an important object, at the close of an impressive sermon on the subject, he cast into the basket a single half dime. Sometimes, however, a subscription for an object he admits to be good is presented to him. It would be amusing, if the subject were not too sad for amusement, to listen to the excuses by which he endeavors to justify himself in refusing to subscribe. The times are very hard—he has debts that must be met—unusual demands have

recently been made on his liberality—he dislikes to put his hand to paper—prefers paying the cash—has no money by him just at this time—thinks he is not now able to do anything—should he have any thing to give he will call on you.

Sometimes, indeed, a liberal impulse comes over *Father Gripe* to give, not of what he now possesses, but of what he hopes to obtain. One day he came to me, in an unusually cheerful mood, and said—"I have been intending to do more for the cause of religion than I have heretofore done." I was glad to hear it, for I knew he could give thousands without feeling the loss. "I have," he continued, "a scheme in my head, and if you can aid me in carrying it out, I have resolved to give the profits"—the old man's countenance became grave, made so, no doubt, by the very solemn promise which he was about to utter, "or, at least, half of them"—and *Father Gripe* hesitated, as if he thought the amount might be too great to bestow—"at any rate," he continued, "I will give some portion of them to the cause of missions, *if I can afford to do so.*" The old man's generous impulse had died away while he was giving it utterance.

Father Gripe is friendly to Christian missions, at least, professes to be. He has many objections to the modes of conducting them, but freely admits their importance, and his obligation to contribute to their support. On one occasion, I went to him to solicit a contribution to aid a worthy young brother to ob-

tain an education: he declined giving any thing, as he was of opinion that young men, by industry and economy, might easily obtain an education themselves. He took occasion, however, to expatiate on the deep interest he felt in the Mission cause, and his willingness to contribute to so noble an object. I suspected, not uncharitably, that his zeal in this noble cause was assumed merely to conceal his parsimoniousness in refusing to aid the young friend whose case had just been brought to his notice. I determined that I would catch him in his own net. Not long after this, Elder *Gatherum*, Agent of the Mission Board, came among us, and I resolved to take him to see *Father Gripe*. After giving the agent some instructions how to proceed, we went in the evening to the beautiful *Gripe Mansion*. We found its proprietor comfortably seated in his parlor, and alone. After some civilities had passed, knowing that delay might frustrate our purpose, I opened the object of our visit. "*Father Gripe*, I heard you say not long since, that you felt a deep interest in the Mission cause, and were willing to contribute to its support, and as brother *Gatherum* is an agent for that cause, I have taken the liberty to bring him to see you, hoping that you may give him a liberal offering." The agent, who well understood his vocation, took up the subject, and spoke feelingly of the perishing condition of the heathen, the pressing wants of our Missionaries, the embarrassments of the Board, and the responsibility of Christians, especially such as God had

prospered in their worldly circumstances. The old *Father* seemed to hear very little of what was said, but to be absorbed in his own thoughts. "I am friendly to the cause of missions," said he, "but I am entirely opposed to sending money out of the country, while we have so many heathen at home." He breathed more freely, and seemed more composed after this remark. The conversation was continued on this subject for a few minutes. Father Gripe avowed himself ready to give *liberally* to the Home Mission cause, but could not give to the Foreign Mission. There was no use of farther discussion on that point. "It is," said the agent, "most providential, that just as I was about to leave home, the excellent Secretary of the Domestic Mission Board placed a commission in my hands, and urged me, in view of their peculiar necessities, to collect something for their treasury, if I found a fit opportunity of doing so. "I have," said the old brother, "peculiar notions on this subject—I would rather my money should go to aid in circulating the Bible, than the support of Missionaries—I know that is God's Word, but I do not know that Missionaries are good men." "Very well," replied the agent, "the Domestic Board has a Bible department, and your contribution can take that direction." *Father Gripe* was caught. He walked slowly to his desk, and, after turning over his bills for some time, he returned with a five dollar note. "You need not," said he, "publish my name; I dislike ostentatious charity." It was a niggardly offering, re-

luctantly bestowed. He ought not to have given less than fifty dollars, and he might have given five hundred more easily than brother *Trueheart* gave fifty, and sister *Mercy* gave one dollar. We returned felicitating ourselves that some little had been obtained, which, though it could not bless the giver, might promote a good cause; but, on inquiry, it was found that *Father Gripe's* note was on a bank of very doubtful solvency, and it had to be passed off at a heavy discount.

Father Gripe is constantly bringing trouble on himself, and reproach on the Redeemer's cause, by the little, selfish, mean, not to say, iniquitous tricks, to which he resorts to obtain or save money. A single case will illustrate. He wished to employ a ditcher. The laborer, a very poor man, demanded so much by the day, or so much by the month for his services. It seemed cheaper to employ him by the month; and old *Mr. Gripe* engaged to board him, and give him his wages. The weather proved very inclement—very little labor could be performed—and when the day of settlement came he charged the poor laborer high board for the inclement days, so as nearly to balance his wages. He sued the extortioner, cast him, and exposed him to the scorn of all who knew the facts of the case. I may remark, in passing, that *Father Gripe* has pretty generally several lawsuits on hand, and the uncertainty of their issue is a great hindrance, so he thinks, to his charities. I do not deem him to be dishonest, though many persons do. In matters involving his own interest, how-

ever, his judgment is liable to be strangely biased by the desire of gain.

Father Gripe promises to make a liberal provision for the cause of Christian benevolence in his will; but I much doubt whether he will do so. I shall be deceived if the same penuriousness which has followed him through life does not accompany him to the tomb. His family all partake of his spirit, and would consider any diversion of his property to the cause of benevolence, a serious calamity on themselves. They need not fear it; for the old man is now very much influenced by the views of his children. He has trained them to his own habits, and found them sound in the main point—*taking care of money.*

The Bible has not, I think, been much studied by the old Father. There are, however, a few passages of Scripture exceedingly precious in his sight, and very frequently on his lips. "We command you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Another passage is a great favorite with brother *Gripe.* Whether he supposes it to be a portion of Holy Writ, I do not know: judging from the reverence he has for it, the frequency with which he quotes it, and the potent influence it exerts over him, I should conclude he does. I do not know in what verse or chapter of the book of *Diabolus* it is found, but it runs thus—"Charity must begin at home."

I ought to say, before I conclude, that this aged brother does not take a religious paper. He was once persuaded to do so, but at the end of six months, he discontinued it in disgust, because it contained so many appeals for money. I learn, however, that he frequently borrows the paper, to read interesting articles, and particularly to look over the prices current, from brother *Allgood*.

Father Gripe is now an old and infirm man, tottering on the brink of the grave. His days are almost numbered. A life of selfishness, and grasping after the world is about to be terminated by the settlement of all his accounts at an impartial and searching bar. How melancholy to follow such a man to the tomb! How painful to preach his funeral! How useful he might have been to the church, his neighborhood, and the world! I am glad that I am not to be his judge. He is a member of the church, and has some influence in it; but has been, if I can rightly judge, a clog, and blot, and curse to it. If a man cannot serve God and Mammon, it seems quite clear that he has served Mammon and not God. All hope of change in his character is at an end. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may" those "do good who are accustomed to do evil." Aged men, like aged trees, strike deeper their roots, and, more enamored, cling to this base soil.

But I must close. Should I be called—as I am sure I shall not be—to furnish an epitaph for the

tomb of *Father Gripe*, the words of the poet would strongly impress themselves on my mind—

> "The man may breathe, but never lives,
> Who much receives, and nothing gives :—
> Whom none can love, and none can thank—
> Creation's blot—creation's blank."

LECTURE XVI.

RUM DRINKING CHRISTIANS.

I PROPOSE, brethren and hearers, to call your attention, this evening, to a pretty numerous class of Christians—*Rum Drinking Christians.* I use the word *rum* in a generic sense—a sense in which it is sometimes employed in Temperance Lectures—to denote all kinds of intoxicating drinks. I do not maintain that drinking rum, as a beverage, is, *per se*, sinful; and, much less, that abstinence from its use is the whole of that Temperance enjoined in the Scriptures: but I do maintain, that, in view of all the circumstances, it is *expedient* for Christians to avoid such use of it. Its use, except medicinally, is unnecessary, expensive, insidious in its influence, fraught with perilous temptation, and frequently ruinous. It has filled the land with vice, misery and degradation; and multiplied fearfully widows, orphans and paupers. It will hardly be pretended by any considerate man that the custom of *Rum Drinking* offers advantages which can overbalance these appalling evils; but should any man maintain so monstrous an opinion, I do not consider him likely to be profited by arguments. I am sorry to say there are many *Rum*

Drinking Christians. They may be found in all churches, orthodox and heterodox, worldly and spiritual; and they are not all nominal, but, we must charitably suppose, many of them are real Christians.

Some Christians drink *Rum*, because they deem it conducive to their health. On this point they are probably mistaken. It is the concurrent opinion of sober physicians that strong drink is not useful, but, in many cases, positively injurious to persons in sound health; and my own observations, made on no very limited scale, confirm this opinion. Some Christians drink *Rum* from the power of habit. Their fathers drank it before them. They have been accustomed from their childhood to drink it. The habit has grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength; and though they may not indulge to positive inebriety, yet the stimulant has become necessary to their pleasant exhilaration, and to the vigor of their bodily or mental efforts. Some Christians drink *Rum* from mere inconsiderateness. They have experienced no bad effects from drinking it, and have seen others drink it with impunity; and they have been placed in circumstances unfavorable to a due consideration of the insidious danger of the practice. They have seen few able and candid works on the Temperance Reformation; or, from some prejudice, they have not deemed them worthy of notice. Some Christians drink *Rum* from false notions of independence. They look on all attempts, however kindly and prudently made, to restrain their indulgence, as an attack on

their liberty; and they drink to make it apparent that they will endure no encroachment on their personal freedom. In their estimation, *Rum Drinking* is one of the privileges purchased for them by the blood of Christ, and secured to them by the Gospel charter; and they cannot consent, from any suggestion of worldly policy, to relinquish it. And some Christians drink *Rum* from the sincere love of it. It is pleasant to their taste—its stimulating influence on their nerves is agreeable—it augments the delights of their social intercourse—and it imparts vivacity to their conversation. They do not, indeed, avow, but carefully conceal, even from themselves, their fondness for it. They drink it, according to their oft repeated assertions, not because they have an appetite for it, but on account of its tonic or prophylactic qualities.

It is no part of my purpose to denounce *Rum Drinking Christians.* That their practice is fraught with temptation and danger to themselves, and mischief to society: even they, in their moments of dispassionate reflection, will scarcely venture to deny. To class them with drunkards; to judge them by principles, the soundness of which they do not admit, and to speak of them in terms of derision and contempt, is manifestly unfair, and can serve no purpose but to irritate, provoke opposition, and retard the Temperance Reform. But, surely, if *Rum Drinking Christians* can be induced seriously to consider the unprofitableness of their indulgence, the insidious growth of the drunken appetite, the seductive influ-

ence of social habits of drinking, and the number of persons who are ensnared and ruined by the practice, they will sacrifice a momentary gratification on the altar of prudence and usefulness.

For the purpose of arousing this class of Christians, and all other persons who may hear me, to profitable reflection on the danger of *Rum Drinking*, I shall present a brief and faithful history of *Tobias Toper*. His father, *Deacon Toper*, was a planter, independent, living in comfort and good style, and highly respected as an honest, hospitable and useful man. As a member of the church, he was attentive to his duties, liberal in his contributions, and generally esteemed. Many years he performed the duties of the deaconship to the entire satisfaction of his brethren. There was one blemish in his character—he *drank Rum*, and furnished it for his family and guests to drink, and encouraged them to use it. In justice, however, some things must be said, in palliation of his course. When brother *Toper* became a member of the church, and for some years afterwards, the custom of *Rum Drinking* was universal in the church, as well as in general society. His habits were formed before the principles of the Temperance Reform were broached; and these principles appeared to him to be an impeachment of the good and venerable men who had throughout their lives used Rum, and served Christ, and had descended to the tomb with unspotted reputations. It should be noted, too, that though a constant, he was a temperate drinker, and used all his

official influence for the suppression of drunkenness within the precincts of the church.

Tobias was a modest, sprightly and promising youth —was well educated, of industrious habits, and correct morals. In early life he made a profession of religion, was baptized, and received into the fellowship of the church of which his father was a deacon. He was deemed a valuable accession to the church, and for several years he fulfilled the most sanguine expectation of his friends. He was zealous, active, liberal, exemplary and useful; in short, nothing could be said in his disparagement, except that he was, like his venerable father, a temperate drinker of *Rum.*

Mr. *Toper*, having reached maturity, and possessing popular manners, commenced mercantile operations in a neighboring city. His business soon seemed to be eminently prosperous. Patrons and friends were multiplied, his trade greatly increased, and his profits were considered satisfactory. He possessed a fine turn for mercantile business, was honorable and high-minded in his dealings, and the most scrupulous Christian could find no fault with him, except that he *sold Rum*—and for this traffic he could plead law, and custom, and, even the necessity of supplying the article to his customers for medicinal and other useful purposes, and, also, *drank himself*, in moderation, of the beverage, by way of encouraging its sale.

After a few years of almost unexampled success, Mr. *Toper* led to the altar one of the noblest specimens of her sex—young, tall, beautiful, of robust

health, the most amiable temper, and the most polished manners, and to crown all, most sincerely and consistently pious, and a member of the same communion with himself. Never did a union promise a fuller measure of domestic bliss. Congeniality, success in business, increasing wealth, the congratulations of friends, and the prospect of long years of health, caused their cup to run over. A large and well-furnished mansion, with a flowing hospitality, made their home the favorite resort of the gay, the cheerful, and the good; nor were the needy and wretched sent empty from their doors. To cement their union and increase their joy, in a few years, several beautiful and promising children, finely trained by a judicious and attentive mother, mingled, with all their innocent and winning sports, in the domestic circle. The sun did not shine on a lovelier or happier family. Only one small cloud darkened the firmament of their noontide bliss—Mr. *Toper drank Rum*—temperately, prudently, to be sure, but habitually. His wife, as wise as she was good, foresaw the danger, and kindly disclosed to her husband how much she would be gratified if he would unite with the Temperance Society. She plead the Total Abstinence cause as only a fond wife, with secret forebodings of the ruin of herself and her dependent children could do; nor was her plea without effect. Mr. *Toper*, who was doatingly fond of his angel wife, was greatly moved. He promised to take the matter under serious consideration. There were, however, two obstacles to his complying

with her request. In the first place, the sale of *Rum* he found very profitable; and it was difficult for him to relinquish this source of gain. This obstacle might have been obviated, had there not been a more serious one in the way. *Deacon Toper*, who retained great influence over his son, *Tobias*, was hostile to the Temperance cause. In his judgment the Total Abstinence pledge was an infringement of Christian liberty, and a confession of incapacity for self-government. The authority of the father prevailed over the persuasion of the spouse; and *Tobias Toper* quieted the apprehension of his excellent wife by the most solemn assurances of his intentions to be prudent, and of his perfect self-control.

Many men, virtuous in prosperity, become reckless and vicious in adversity. Had Mr. *Toper* not been overtaken by a reverse of fortune, his history might have been far different from that which I am called to relate. Suddenly, and to the amazement of all his friends, he failed in business; and his failure was total and overwhelming. In his extremity, he resorted, or was supposed to have resorted to dishonorable means to save a portion of his property, and lost his character. Owing to some liability assumed for him, and which he was unable to meet, *Deacon Toper* became utterly alienated from his dishonored son, and visited his displeasure not only on him, but on his excellent wife and unoffending children. How melancholy to contemplate the change which in a few months came over this happy family. Their spacious, hospi-

table home, their fine furniture, their respectable equipage, and all their means of comfort and sustenance, had passed into other hands; and with their property and hospitality had passed away most of their friends. The wife bore the shock with Christian fortitude, and had her husband only possessed her resolution and enterprise, they would have risen above all their calamities. But, alas! poor *Toper* had formed a fatal habit, whose disastrous effects now began to appear. He sought the alleviation of his distress in *Rum Drinking* —became intemperate—was soon a confirmed sot—and a wretched, ragged *loafer*. We have known many to fall by *Rum Drinking*, but never one to fall so suddenly, rapidly and profoundly as *Tobias Toper*. When his pecuniary embarrassments overtook him he was of high standing in society, a respected member of a church, and of irreproachable character—in less than two years he had passed through every stage of intemperance to the lowest point of degradation to which that hateful vice ever sinks its hapless victims. Abandoning all occupation, he cast his lovely wife, and sweet, sprightly children on the care of generous relatives, illy able to support them. He became a vagabond, and sponge on his acquaintances. I first saw him in a barber's shop, begging some one, and begging in vain, to lend him a dollar to pay a debt, which, he said, he had promised to pay that day. After obtaining money of all his acquaintances, who would trust him, or, rather, were willing to make him a donation, he, by sheer importunity, borrowed from ost-

lers, draymen, and hotel waiters, under fair promises of speedy payment, small sums, frequently not exceeding a dime, which were spent in the lowest and meanest dram-shops for *Rum*, to satiate, or rather increase, his intemperate and burning appetite. But in his deepest wretchedness he never abandoned his religious hope. Excluded from the church, scorned of men, and hopelessly enslaved by vice, he would talk to his *Rum-house* companions of his experience, consolations, and prospects of heavenly felicity.

When he was free from the maddening influence of *Rum*, *Toper* almost adored his lovely and devoted wife. But drunkenness gradually changed him from an amiable and tender husband to an unfeeling and brutal tyrant. When drunk, the woman whom he had sworn to love, and who loved him with a devotion bordering on idolatry, was the object of his most implacable hatred, and most unfeeling abuse; but when sober, he would atone for his unkindness by ingenuous confessions, bitter tears, and promises of reformation. On one occasion, his wife was compelled to seek protection from his drunken rage of a brother-in-law—a protection which was promptly afforded. *Toper* swore vengeance against his unoffending relative. It was not long before he found an opportunity of indulging his vindictive spirit. He armed himself, went to the house of his brother-in-law, where his trembling wife had found a refuge, called him out, attacked him, and inflicted on him a serious wound. At first, it was not deemed dangerous; but after a while, aggravated by

an unfortunate constitutional tendency, it became alarming, and finally proved fatal. Poor *Toper* was arrested, tried, and condemned to three years' confinement in the Penitentiary. He would have been sentenced to be hung, had it not appeared probable from the evidence that it was not his purpose to commit murder, and that the wounded man might have recovered under more skillful medical treatment. For three long years, *Toper*, once so gay, so prosperous, and so beloved, was the inmate of the State Prison, the companion of felons, and doomed to hard toil and fare. When his term of servitude expired, it was hoped that long continued abstinence had subdued his appetite for *Rum*. No entreaties, nor offers of friendship could induce his wife to abandon him. She clung to him with a tenacity which seemed to be increased by his degradation and wretchedness. After his release from the Penitentiary, she received him into the little room where, by her industry and good management, she had maintained herself and children in comfort. By every act which love could prompt, or ingenuity devise, she sought to win him back to the path of sobriety, and soothe him in his infamy. But all her efforts were vain. The drunken appetite returned with his freedom. In a few weeks, his habits of inebriation and *loafing* were fully reëstablished. He was soon seen at his old haunts of dissipation, mingling with his corrupt associates, and resorting to the same detestable means of indulging his appetite for *Rum*.

It seems to be a wise and beneficent arrangement of Providence, that a drunkard's life shall be short. Wretched himself, with little prospect of his reformation, and a burden and curse to his friends, the early close of his probation is a mercy. It was not probable that such a life as that of *Tobias Toper* could be long preserved. Thinly clad, exposed to the inclement night air, of irregular habits, and with a stomach constantly distended and burning with fire water, his end could not be distant. He was suddenly seized with *delirium tremens*. His sufferings were intense, beyond all description. He fancied that his children, for whom, in his degradation, he cherished a warm affection, were burning up before his eyes. The scene was pictured, before his maniac mind, with all the vividness of reality. He saw, and to his agonized wife, and a few attendants at his dying bed, he would pathetically describe the kindling flame, the peril of his children, their tortures, as the advancing fire would consume member after member of their bodies, and the utter consumption of the helpless innocents; and his anguish was expressed by groans, and screams, and loud laments One frightful illusion passed only to make way for another equally frightful and agonizing. After a few days of these dreadful sufferings, the poor maniac died—died without a lucid interval, or any mitigation of his anguish.

I was called to attend his funeral. Never had I received so deep an impression of the evils of drunk-

enness, and the danger of *Rum Drinking*, as while gazing on the lifeless body of the inebriate, *Tobias Toper*. I thought of what he was—what, but for a father's example and influence, he might have been—to what disgrace and misery *Rum Drinking* had brought him—what a fearful death he had died—and my soul shuddered while I attempted to trace his flight to the eternal world. There sat his faithful wife, bathed in tears, broken-hearted, utterly crushed by a sense of her misfortunes, and her unmerited disgrace, and yet humbly confiding in her heavenly Father. The little children, too young to understand their loss or disgrace, clustered about their fond mother, wondering why she wept. It was a heart-touching scene, and full of instruction. I wished that every drunkard, every young man who uses intoxicating drinks, and every *Rum Drinking Christian* could gaze upon it. But my lips were sealed by a regard to the feelings of the living. I spake of the mercy of God, the fullness of Christ, the sufficiency of grace, and the blessedness of the righteous; but I thought of a drunkard's life—a drunkard's death—a drunkard's end—and the words of the apostle seemed to sound in my ears—"Neither shall drunkards inherit the kingdom of Heaven."

The body of the unfortunate *Toper* was followed to its final resting place by a few friends of the family who remembered his former respectability. It was laid in a drunkard's grave. Let no stone mark the

spot, so that when his children grow up they may find no memorial of a father's disgrace.

I had intended to close with some remarks, but I have barely time to say, that, all things considered, it is wiser, better, safer for all men, and especially for *Christians*, to abstain from *Rum Drinking*.

LECTURE XVII.

INCONSISTENT CHRISTIANS.

A CONSISTENT Christian is one whose principles, professions, and conduct are in harmony. His life is pure, peaceable, beneficent, devout, and zealous, as "becometh the gospel of Christ." You may always find him in the right place, in the right company, in the right employment, and tending in the right direction. He may err in judgment, or fail of success, but his purposes are good. His spirit, conversation, and works bear concurrent and lucid testimony to the sincerity of his Christian profession, and the stability of his religious principles. Place him in circumstances of temptation and of peril, and you may venture to predict that his conduct will bring no reproach on the Master whom he serves. What beautiful specimens of consistency we have in the lives of Joseph, Daniel, and Paul. In prosperity or in adversity, in successes or in dangers, in palaces or in prisons, in labors or in sufferings, in public or in private, their piety shone with equal radiance. Perfect consistency cannot be found among mortals. It would imply entire freedom from sin and error; and this exemption cannot be affirmed of Christians, even the most matured. But to

a high degree of consistency all may, and many do, attain.

My hearers will readily perceive that an *Inconsistent Christian* is one who does not possess, or possesses in a very imperfect measure, the character which I have described. His conduct is not in unison with his professions. He professes to love Christ supremely, but does not keep his commandments. He proclaims that he is dead to the world, but nobody would thus infer from the earnestness with which he pursues it, or the zest with which he enjoys it. He is a member of a Christian church; but if you would learn the fact, you must examine, not his conversation or conduct, but the church records. *Inconsistent Christians* are a numerous class. They abound in all communions. No Christians, indeed, are wholly exempt from the evil. But I propose in this Lecture to treat of those marked and flagrant instances of it which are a stumbling block to the wicked, a grief to the godly, and a reproach to Christianity. Such cases are constantly attracting our notice. As no one Christian could possibly exemplify in his life every kind of inconsistency found in the churches, I will select a number of individuals, each representing a particular phase of the evil.

Brother *Severe* is a minister of the gospel—an eminent revivalist. I once had the pleasure of attending a series of meetings with him. His preaching was plain, searching, and faithful. His delineations of vice and its consequences were truthful, and in some

cases absolutely horrifying. His views of moral obligation were all extreme. Every species of sin came in for a full share of his reproof and denunciation. He seemed to have a mission to probe every heart, and awaken every conscience. The wicked were afraid to hear his sermons, lest their sins—even their most secret sins—should be placed in startling array before their eyes. How much was I surprised to learn, as I afterwards did, from a most trust-worthy source, that he was at this very time dealing in lottery tickets. In some other Christians such conduct would not have seemed so strange. They are loose casuists. But that Elder *Severe*, whose views of morality were so extreme and inflexible, should have engaged in a traffic condemned by all intelligent and earnest Christians, was glaringly inconsistent. He felt it to be so; for he carefully concealed his conduct from his most intimate Christian friends. I was grieved at his course, and never since have had full confidence in his sincerity.

Brother *Greatman* is, in many respects, the most prominent member of the church to which he belongs. He is rich, intelligent, occupies a high social position, and is much respected by the community. He possesses some fine qualities. He is honorable, liberal, hospitable, and of conciliating manners. He ought to be, and might be, but he is not, the most useful member of the church. Mr. *Greatman* is an aspirant after political distinction. He attends political meetings, and makes speeches which are complimented for

their logic, eloquence, and fervor. And yet no entreaty can induce him to teach a class in a Sunday-school, offer prayer in a social meeting, or make an address to promote any religious or benevolent object. Now this is inconsistent; and all the truth must be told. When he was a young man, less experienced and less popular than he now is, he took an active and most acceptable part in social prayer meetings and Sunday-schools; but as he has grown older, and his knowledge and influence have increased, his efficiency in the cause of Christ has diminished. Like Peter, on the night of his fall, he follows Christ "afar off." I fear that the resemblance between him and Peter may proceed another step; and that in some unguarded moment, as did that apostle, he may deny his Lord. And, alas! many fall like Peter, who do not, like Peter, weep.

Brother *Fickly* was for many years an esteemed, active, and useful member of a country church. Interest or inclination led him to sell his farm, and remove to the city. Whether he sought, as he should have done, in the change to promote the glory of God, I know not. His leaving the country was deeply lamented by his brethren. They felt that the cause of Christ was sustaining a severe loss, but comforted themselves with the persuasion that their loss would be the gain of the city churches. I was assured by the excellent pastor of brother *Fickly* that we would find him a valuable acquisition to our ranks. We formed high expectations of his usefulness, and were

prepared to give him a hearty welcome. He came, bringing with him a letter of dismission for himself and several members of his family. Month after month passed away, and he failed to hand his certificate of dismission to the church. He attended sometimes one place of worship, and sometimes another, but was never seen in a Sunday-school or a prayer meeting. When affectionately urged to unite with a church, he had a long list of complaints and objections to recite. The brethren are distant in their manners; the worship is formal; there is a great deal of pride in the congregation; things are not like they were in the country. Now, suppose all these things be admitted, what then? If the brethren are distant toward him, is not his course adapted to repel their confidence and affection? If the worship is formal, is he doing aught to increase its fervency? If there is much pride in the church, is he setting them an example of humility? But things are not like they were in the country. Be it so. How could it be otherwise? In some respects city churches differ, and must differ, from country churches. But the same gospel is preached, the same God is worshipped, the same ordinances are observed, and the same hopes are cherished in the churches of the city and the country. Years have passed away since brother *Fickly* took up his abode in the city, and he still retains, if he has not lost, his certificate of dismission. He is a wandering sheep—an out-side Christian—lost to the denomination—lost to the cause of Christ—his religious enjoyment is lost; and I fear his soul will be finally lost.

I must now notice the inconsistency of brother *Sleeper*. He is fond of revivals, and deems himself peculiarly fitted to labor in them. I once heard him say, "Other men may live without revivals, but I never can." I thought the remark savored of presumption. I knew that many ministers of earnest piety, and faithful, who would have rejoiced greatly in the revival of the Lord's work, had been doomed to lament the prevalence of sin and infidelity in the world, and of coldness and apathy in the churches. Our Lord himself did not always, nor chiefly, labor in revivals. And who was brother *Sleeper*, that he should certainly be exempt from the discouragements to which his brethren and his Master had been subject? In revivals, he was a most active Christian. He seemed never to tire in attending meetings, praying, singing, conversing with inquirers, and visiting from house to house. Were you to judge of his piety solely from his labors in such seasons, you would pronounce him the most exemplary and efficient of Christians. But to form a right estimate of his character, you must see him when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. His piety has now so sadly degenerated that you can scarcely recognize him. His zeal has vanished "like the early cloud or morning dew." Now he is frequently absent from the house of worship on Lord's-day morning, is rarely present at the weekly evening lecture, and is never seen in the prayer meeting. He thinks his pastor a very cold and profitless preacher. He wishes to hear

stirring, melting sermons all the time. He has no relish for doctrinal preaching. His soul loathes it, as the Israelites loathed the manna in the desert. He can live only on condiments; and as he cannot obtain a supply of these, he pines, and is ready to perish. But should another revival take place, he will renew his strength, mount up with wings as an eagle; he will run, and not be weary, and he will walk, and not faint, until the excitement subsides.

Now, this course of brother *Sleeper* is grossly and shamefully inconsistent. True piety is steady—not fitful. A time of revival may call for labors, peculiar in kind, and more abundant in measure; but every season has its appropriate responsibilities and duties. Christ is always lovely, his service is always pleasant, souls are always precious, sin is always hateful, heaven and hell are always solemn realities, and death is always approaching. How timely, then, the apostolic exhortation—"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."*

Brother *Fairword* is an eminent preacher of the gospel—a clear, earnest, practical preacher. For impressive declamation he is almost unrivalled. He has gathered, as might be expected, a large and respectable congregation. He is a decided and earnest advocate of what are usually termed the benevolent operations of the day. Certainly, few ministers can plead the cause of Christian benevolence more forcibly than

* 1 Thess. v: 6.

he does. He is sent for, far and near, to deliver sermons and addresses before Bible, Mission, and kindred Associations. These invitations he usually accepts, and pleads the cause of Christian liberality with an eloquence, force, and pathos which not merely command respect, but excite universal admiration. Now this is very commendable. But mark the inconsistency of the man! God has greatly prospered him in his temporal interests. He is rich, and possessing a good judgment, and ready tact in the management of his estate, he is constantly growing richer. His church, too, makes him a reasonable compensation for his pastoral labors. And yet, from all that I can learn, he gives nothing, or very little, to promote the cause of Christ. He may suppose that he performs his part by pleading the claims of Christian benevolence; but in this he errs. It is required of every man according to that he hath. Brother *Fairword* has ability to present and enforce the claims of charity; and this ability he properly consecrates to Christ. But the Elder has more: he has wealth. Is he not bound to devote this also to Christ? Because he usefully employs one talent, is he at liberty to hide another in the earth? Will not Christ hold him responsible for the use which he makes of both talents? Besides, how much would the weight and influence of his eloquent addresses be increased if they were enforced by the example of his own noble liberality? How can he hope to convince his hearers of his sincerity when they see such a glaring inconsistency

between his words and his deeds? The discrepancy is noticed more than he is aware of; and it is surely having its effect. The meagre contributions made by the members of the church under his pastorate proclaim too clearly that his example is exerting a more potent influence than his eloquent declamation.

Sister *Showey* is in very comfortable worldly circumstances—neither rich nor poor. When, however, she is solicited to contribute any thing in charity, or to promote the cause of Christ, or even for the support of the church of which she is a member, she invariably excuses herself on the plea of inability. Her disposition is most benevolent and generous, according to her own account. "You have come to the right one," she says to the solicitor, "if I only had the means to aid you. No person is fonder of giving than I am, or would give more liberally than I would; I am poor—my family is large and expensive—my means have fallen short this year; and I fear I shall not be able to pay my just debts. I am grieved that I cannot aid you; I feel a deep interest in the cause which you plead, and hope I shall be able next year to give something handsome to it." These are fair words; but they are deceitful. Go to sister *Showey's* house, and you will find her living in the greatest comfort, and even in splendor. Her furniture is elegant; her table sumptuous; her daughters dress more expensively than any young ladies in the neighborhood; and, in short, no cost is spared which can contribute to the enjoyment or respectability of her family. And

I know that she occasionally lends out small sums of money at *unlawful* interest. No pew in the church, except the very best, would suit her. This having been procured for her, she furnished with cushions, footstools, and gilt books, in tasteful and costly style; though she rarely pays the rent. On one occasion the church, being in debt, resolved to make an effort to pay it. The members, according to their several abilities, contributed to secure so desirable an object. But sister *Showey* declined giving any thing on her usual plea of poverty. While, however, this effort was being made, and some of the poorer members were giving beyond their ability, to supply her lack of liberality, she had a large and gay party at her house, which cost her five times as much as her fair proportion of the church debt. She might be a useful Christian, for she is kind in her spirit, and refined in her manners; but her inconsistency, "known and read of all men," makes her "a by-word and hissing" among the ungodly, and a mortification to her brethren.

Brother *Worthless* is a bundle of inconsistencies. His life is made up of them. To point them out would be to write his entire religious history. You cannot infer from his principles what his conduct will be; nor from his conduct what his principles are. He is a professor of religion; but his life is often sadly at variance with his profession. But I must be more definite in my remarks. Brother *Worthless* contracts debts without a reasonable prospect of paying them;

and then promises to pay, without making any earnest effort to fulfill his engagements. I do not affirm that he wilfully violates his promises; but he has so frequently broken them, that they command no confidence in trade. I dare not charge him with deliberate lying, but he is so addicted to exaggeration, that little reliance can be placed on his solemn asseverations. He is a warm advocate of temperance—would gladly make abstinence from strong drink a term of church membership; and yet he is completely enslaved by his appetites. He is a man of energy. No inclemency of weather prevents him from attending to his secular business. In heat and cold, in rain, snow, and storm, early and late, he may be found at the market, in his store, or wherever interest may call him. He attends, through all difficulties, political meetings, the meetings of the Division of the Sons of Temperance, musical concerts, literary lectures, the meetings of joint stock companies—in short, any meetings for business or pleasure, and even, occasionally, it is said, the theatre; but he rarely attends religious meetings, except on Lord's-day mornings; and then the slightest excuse—fatigue, the muddiness of the streets, the threatening aspect of the weather, or the presence of irreligious company—will suffice to keep him away. One cloudy Sunday his place in the house of worship was vacant. Monday morning I met him at the market in a torrent of rain. I said to him, "I did not see you at church yesterday morning." "No," he replied, "I was afraid it would rain." "But you are not afraid

of the rain this morning, it seems," I remarked. "Oh," he said, "I am *obliged* to come to market." Brother *Worthless* is very careful to send his daughters to a dancing school; but they, as might be expected, since they commenced learning to dance, have very little relish for the Sunday-school, and seldom attend it; and he does not use his authority or influence to correct the evil. During a revival, in which many children of his neighbors were joyfully converted, he professed great concern for the salvation of his own children, though he was rarely present at the meetings, and took no pains to induce his children to attend. Their conversion, under the circumstances, would have been a miracle—a harvest without sowing. He is seldom present at church meetings, but is almost certain to complain of what is done in his absence. He is fond of doctrinal preaching, and deems it a great hardship when his pastor does not feed him on such food as he relishes. But I need not dwell longer on his character. Suffice it to say, that it is made up of groundless prejudices, childish whims, strange inconsistencies, and criminal perversities.

The *bad effects* of inconsistency among Christians are manifold, obvious, and melancholy.

It is subversive of *usefulness*. Who can confide in an inconsistent Christian? "I heard," says a Christian minister, "an excellent sermon to young people, on a New Year's day, in the morning. The text was, 'Redeeming the time because the days are evil.'" The minister then went to dine, and spend the rest of

the day with a party, where the time was spent in feasting, levity, and folly. Late in the evening, one of the party observed, "Really, this is a poor way of redeeming the time." "Poh!" said another, "it is all a farce."* What a pity it was that the influence of a good sermon should have been counteracted by the thoughtless inconsistency of the minister who preached it! But so it was. And such must ever be the effect of inconsistency in Christians. The most instructive and powerful sermons will avail nothing if they are not enforced by the resistless eloquence of a blameless life. Men suspect, and well may they suspect, the sincerity of those whose lives are not in harmony with their principles and teaching. The pulpit cannot, and it ought not, to shield them from merited reproach. "Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"† We instinctively reply to the inconsistent reprover of sin, "Physician, heal thyself." If, then, Christians would be useful —would be "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world"—their lives must be coincident with their principles—a living, luminous, inspiring commentary on the doctrine which they profess and teach. Then will the world give them credit for sin-

* Arvine's Cy. of Mer. and Rel. Anecdotes, 209.

† Rom. ii: 21, 22.

cerity, do homage to their moral worth, and be won by the gospel of Christ.

Inconsistency among Christians is a *reproach to the Redeemer*. It seems unfair that Christianity should be held responsible for the misconduct of those who assume her garb and her name, but do not imbibe her spirit, reverence her authority, or trust in her promises: but so it is, and so, to a great extent, it must be. But few will take the trouble to discriminate between Christianity and the unworthy professors of it. Most men will form their estimate of the system from the lives of those who embrace it, whether sincerely or hypocritically. Thus Christ is wounded in the house of his friends. The inconsistencies of his followers are a hindrance to his cause, and a reproach to his name. If, then, Christians would honor their Master, they must carefully avoid—in spirit, in word, and in deed—whatsoever is incompatible with their high profession and their solemn obligations, and assiduously follow whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report.

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